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*English*

*College*

# Composition and Communication

THE OFFICIAL BULLETIN OF THE CONFERENCE ON  
COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION

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# Orientation Programs in Freshman English

## — A Symposium

Nearly every college and university has some kind of orientation program in English, and to obtain ideas concerning the details of some of these programs, CCC asked a number of representative institutions—representative both of type and of geography—to send in brief descriptions. Some of the information suggested for inclusion was: general plan; kinds of tests included for English purposes—English placement, intelligence, reading, theme, speaking, etc.; time devoted to all phases of English orientation; time when held, pre- or post-registration; methods of scoring or grading tests and papers; uses made of results, as in sectioning for advanced, middle, and low groups; incentive in low or advanced sections; end-of-semester comparisons with orientation results, and the like. In fact, the guiding principle stated for the descriptions was: What information will be most useful to others in a similar institution?

### Bowling Green State University

Bowling Green State University's orientation program in English is based upon a placement test consisting of a 500-word extemporaneous theme. A member of the Department of English addresses the freshman class at one of the first meetings in the university's orientation week, explaining the test and its significance and distributing copies of the list of topics on which the students are to write. After twenty-four hours for reflection, the freshmen write themes on such subjects as "Why I Have Come to College," "Why I Have Chosen Bowling Green State University," and "My Home Town as a Place to Live."

The themes are read by members of

the Department of English for the purpose of placing the students in English 90, the non-credit, remedial course; English 101, the first semester of the composition course; or English 102, the second semester of the composition course. At present about 7.5 per cent of the entering class is placed in English 90, another 7.5 percent in English 102, and the remainder in English 101. The papers of all students assigned to English 90 or English 102 are read by at least two members of the department and papers which seem to be on the borderline are read by three.

Studies are being conducted to determine the relative success in English courses and in the university at large of the three groups distinguished by the placement test. However, since the present orientation program has been in operation for only two years, the results of these studies cannot as yet be considered to be conclusive.

NORBERT F. O'DONNELL

### Brigham Young University

The general plan of our entire orientation program involves about one week of the freshman's time before registration. At the beginning of that period students are divided into four big groups to which they belong for the duration of the orientation week. The division into groups makes the testing program much easier to administer. Before the students are subjected to the tests, however, they are given information about the organization of the university, group requirements and the reasons why students are asked to fill group requirements, the facilities that will be available to them, the student organizations which they may join,

and other matters which the Dean of Students may feel pertinent to discuss.

The battery of tests which they take includes the A C E Psychological Examination, the Cooperative General Cultural Achievement Batteries, the Kuder Preference Record, the Mooney Problem Check List, the Minnesota Multi-Phasic Personality Inventory, and the Purdue Placement Test in English, Form A. This last test is given on the first or second day of the week.

Each evening of orientation week all of the freshmen meet in the Fieldhouse for entertainment and talks about campus life. Many of their fellow students appear on these programs.

Though we have used the Purdue Placement Test in English, Form A for many years, we are seriously considering the substitution of the Cooperative English Test for our placement test next year. We have used the machine-scored tests and get our results out so that we may place freshmen in three groups on registration day. The top group includes all students who have made a score of 152 or better in the English Placement Test. The bottom includes all of those who score less than 80 points. We have no formal tests in composition to aid us in this placement program, but we ask teachers to call for a theme during the first class period in English. Students who are obviously misplaced are then referred to the Director of Freshman English for consultation and may be transferred if he deems it advisable.

In our history of placing students in English, for several years we forced students to take English A, a class without credit, then substituted for this practice a five-hour class for three hours' credit, and finally, owing to the tremendous influx of students in the last three years, we have narrowed down our course in Freshman English, which we have called Composition and Literature, to a course

in composition for the lowest group of students. At the present we are seriously considering returning to the original practice of forcing students on the lowest level to take a two-hour course without credit. I might say that most of us feel that the five-hour course for three hours' credit was the best plan that we have adopted, but circumstances are forcing us to temporize.

We are considering the desirability of excusing our top group of freshmen from one quarter of Freshman English though we shall expect these students to register for a class in literature as a substitute for the course they are missing.

We have this year made a study of the results of the placement test and are now in the process of sending out the individual scores of students to the superintendents and principals of the high schools from which the students came. We hope this practice may lead to some improvement in the preparation of the students who come to us.

KARL YOUNG

#### Duke University

Duke University requires two semesters of English composition (English 1 and 2) of all freshmen except 8-10% who are required to take a third semester (English L, full credit) and about 5% who are admitted to English 2A, thus avoiding English 1. The placement tests which concern English are used to select L and 2A candidates, though placement records of all freshmen are made known to all instructors at the beginning of the first term. The tests are the ACE Psychological Test (only the L-score is used), the Cooperative English Test C-2: Reading Comprehension, the Cooperative English Test A: Mechanics of Expression. Experience has shaped a rule-of-thumb formula to provide an index number ranking all students: using percentile scores based on

national norms, Psychological L-score is weighted 1, Reading 1, and Mechanics 2. The sum is the index.

Candidates for L are selected from the bottom up to any point necessary to fill the sections provided. Judgment based upon experience supplements the index number for the top quarter of L candidates, additional weight being given in such cases to the score on Mechanics. No essay is set for L candidates.

Similarly from the top of the class down, 2A candidates are selected to a number one third more than will eventually be admitted to 2A. These freshmen must then write an hour impromptu essay on a common topic. The essays are read by three staff members who make a final selection in the light of the essays and placement test results.

Errors of assignment to L and 2A are corrected informally during the first two weeks of the semester. English 2A is not available to freshmen entering in February and June, but those needing English L must take it at their first opportunity before entering English 1.

A rather cursory tour of the library, conducted in small groups led by upper-classmen, has been found ineffective and has been postponed to the spring semester when freshmen are working on their investigative papers.

F. E. BOWMAN

#### University of Florida

First-semester students are oriented to the freshman course in English even though no time is taken from the general orientation program for this purpose. Among other tests, the ACE Psychological Examination and the Cooperative English Effectiveness of Expression Test are administered by the Board of Examiners of the University of Florida to every high school senior. The scores of students who enroll in the Uni-

versity are made available to the entire staff of the freshman English course, and are used primarily to counsel students and secondarily to assign to special writing laboratory sections those students who score above the 80th percentile on the tests.

A freshman taking the course in reading, writing, speaking, and listening attends one lecture, two discussion meetings, and one writing laboratory each week. There are no non-credit sections, although voluntary clinical and remedial services are available in reading, writing, and speaking. Foreign students are assigned to sections taught by an instructor who has specialized in the teaching of English to foreign students.

During the first week of classes each student takes the Cooperative Mechanics of Expression Test and the Diagnostic Reading Test, a copy of the results going to the student and another to his instructor. In an early lecture, guidance is given in the interpretation of the scores. During the second semester alternate forms of these two tests are administered, and students and instructors can compare the two performances. Since tests at the University of Florida are administered by the Board of Examiners at evening sessions, the amount of time taken from class meetings is held to a minimum.

The early lectures orient students to various aspects of the course. After the first progress test, usually at the end of five weeks, each student has a conference with his instructor who, in addition to test data, has the background questionnaire which each student has filled out. Additional information may be obtained from the autobiography which each student writes as his first writing laboratory assignment. Later in the semester a student who is in danger of failing holds a conference with his instructor and jointly makes out a re-

port which is sent to the student's parents.

At the University of Florida orientation begins before enrollment and continues throughout the first semester.

CLARENCE DERRICK

### Georgetown University

The Orientation Program of Georgetown University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences aims at making a student's transition to college easier by familiarizing him with the people and concerns which will be important to him during his forthcoming years at the university. The program consists of talks, tests, and tea, introducing the student to the scholastic, social, religious, athletic, extracurricular, and (as the case may be) military matters connected with university life.

The schedule of events, including registration, begins a week before regular classes in September and continues into November. During the concentrated first week, the president, dean, faculty members, an alumni representative, and student leaders present talks on liberal education, school traditions and activities, administrative and scholastic problems, intellectual and devotional aspects of religion, athletic programs, military service obligations, and the ROTC. Four lectures spaced through October and November advise the students regarding good study and reading techniques, mechanics of the marking system, QPI, attendance requirements, the curriculum, and student counselling services. In addition, during the first week of classes, the English Department has the responsibility of reviewing with the students the pamphlet *How to Study*.

Approximately twelve hours of the Orientation Week schedule is devoted to testing. In 1954, an intelligence test, ACE Social Studies Form X, English Form T, Religion Form A, Natural Sciences Form

Z, Mathematics Form X, and the Iowa Silent Reading test were administered. Sectioning was determined in part by results primarily of the Reading and Religion tests. Grading was manually done by the faculty. A profile of results has also been used for student counselling and in determining later changes in assignment. This spring, comparisons with orientation results are planned.

On the social side, the Orientation Program really begins when the new student entering the campus gates is greeted by an upperclassman and helped to get settled. On the first day, also, a reception and open house are held for both parents and students. Events of the first week conclude with a dance to which girls from local colleges are invited. Very likely, the freshman at this point feels that the program has been an excellent introduction to university life.

PAUL R. SULLIVAN

### Georgia Institute of Technology

At Georgia Tech, during a pre-registration week of general orientation, the incoming freshmen take an hour-long Placement Test in English, made of 100 objective questions on Spelling, Vocabulary, Functions of words, phrases, and clauses, Punctuation, Grammatical usage and sentence structure, and Reading. Locally constructed, this test is answered on IBM sheets and graded by machine, as part of a large battery of tests given the freshmen.

Scores on the English Placement Test are used to make the division between students going into regular college work in English and students going into non-college-credit remedial work (a review of fundamentals designed to provide the weak student one more opportunity to prepare himself for college-level reading and writing). The raw score critical point, for several years stabilized at 47, has provided for the remedial sec-

tions a maximum of 20 per cent and a minimum of 15 per cent of the students, who are arbitrarily assigned the lowest two deciles. Students scoring 48 and higher are divided into somewhat more regular tenths—on paper, not for division purposes. The test, designed primarily to make the regular-remedial division, is apparently not too discriminating in the upper registers and needs to be replaced if we are to discover quickly and give appreciable aid to the superior student.

A second stage of testing is the class writing done at the end of the first week of regular classes. This writing, in both remedial and regular sections, is used by each teacher to analyze the weaknesses characteristic of his class and of each individual student. During the first two weeks of the quarter, misplaced students may be shifted from remedial to regular or regular to remedial sections. Further, at the end of the quarter, an exceptionally improved student in the remedial sections may be given credit for the first quarter of college work (rare: three students in six years).

The last stage of orientation in English is a pamphlet "So You're Starting Freshman English." Given to the student and read with him, at the first class meeting, this pamphlet presents the aims of the freshman English courses, offers hints on how to comply with requirements and to study, and tries to establish rapport so that teacher and student can have a profitable experience.

No controlled experiment has tested the efficacy of the Placement Test or of the remedial course itself; but a history of two consecutive groups of students starting in remedial sections shows that about 8 per cent of them graduated within 4 years, 34 per cent within 5 years, 43 per cent within 6 years (and a total of 54 per cent who completed required English courses but did not graduate). These students have been helped—but at

high cost in energy to the teacher and with total disregard to the more profitable experience that such time and energy could have given the better-prepared student.

JAMES B. HAMAN

### State University of Iowa

Since most of the colleges at the State University of Iowa have a proficiency instead of a credit requirement, the pre-registration testing program for Communication Skills is devoted to determining the efficiency of the individual student in reading, writing, and speaking. Entering students take the following tests: S.U.I. reading rate and comprehension, S.U.I. vocabulary, and the S.U.I. English Composition (usage) test; they write a 450-word theme and deliver a four-minute speech. Two hours are allowed for the theme, one hour of preparation for the speech. Raw scores on all tests are converted into percentile ranks, which are used as a basis for registration and sectioning. A small percentage of students are exempted from the Skills course, approximately 20 per cent are registered for a one-semester accelerated course, about 60 per cent the regular two-semester course, and about 15 per cent are registered for the two-semester course plus a first semester supplementary remedial course. Within the one-semester and two-semester courses, students are placed in writing-emphasis, speech-emphasis, or balanced sections, according to their needs. The two-credit, four-hour remedial course is a laboratory course, and includes instruction in the fundamentals of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

During the first two weeks of classroom instruction, instructors may recommend, on the basis of student performance, individual changes in sectioning. This first two-week period is also used for a post-registration orientation program, which has several objectives: to famil-

iarize the student with his instructor, his classmates, his textbooks and dictionary; to introduce him to the University library and to library techniques; to point out that tutorial help is available to him, on a voluntary no-credit basis, in the reading clinic, the speech clinic, and the writing laboratory; to introduce him to the integrated nature of the communication skills; and to acquaint him with the practical nature of the work in its application both to his college work and later experience.

Final examinations in each course are similar to, sometimes identical with, the entrance examinations. Students who fail to demonstrate proficiency in writing, speaking, or reading roughly comparable to the average junior are held for further work in that particular skill.

DELBERT WYLDER

#### Iowa State Teachers College

Students entering Iowa State Teachers College are given, during the pre-registration period, the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, the ACE Psychological Test, and two parts—"Mechanics of Expression" and "Effectiveness of Expression"—of the Cooperative English Test. Except in unusual cases, the scores on the Cooperative English Test are the only ones which we use.

If a student scores in the ninetieth percentile on these two portions of the Cooperative Test, he is automatically excused from our first quarter composition course (English I). He is enrolled, instead, in a special section of the second quarter course (English II), which is reserved for exempted students. After completing English II he is required to take Mass Communication, an elective course, to fulfill his English requirement.

There are, of course, good students who do not, for one reason or another, score in the ninetieth percentile on the test. Such students may be recommended for exemption by their individual in-

structors. It is at this point that the scores on the other tests become a deciding factor. Usually exemption is given only when the scores on these tests and those on the English test are well above average. The score on at least one of the tests should be well within the ninetieth percentile.

There is no sectioning beyond that described above. A writing clinic has been established for the poorer students. Attendance is completely voluntary. The instructor may, of course, recommend to the student that he enter, but he cannot require attendance. Conversely, any student is free to attend the clinic whether or not his instructor has suggested it. Clinic work is done in addition to the regular class work, and carries neither credit hours nor a grade.

Ross M. JEWELL

#### University of Kansas

Before our entering freshmen enroll, the University Guidance Bureau gives them a series of orientation tests, two of which are used to determine placement in first-semester English courses. One of these tests covers usage, spelling, and vocabulary; the other, vocabulary, reading speed, and reading comprehension. Both are published by the Cooperative Test Service. When the answer sheets have been machine-scored, a "profile" of each student's performance is drawn up, and the results interpreted by Guidance Bureau personnel. As a rule we have found that the score on usage is the most accurate predictor of success, or lack of it, in English composition, though the scores on spelling, vocabulary, and reading comprehension are also taken into account.

In the past it has been necessary to set our standards so that about 32 per cent of the entering freshmen were enrolled in English 1a, a remedial course that covers the same ground as the regular course and confers the same number

of credits, but that meets five hours a week instead of three and requires a good deal more writing. We are pleased to report, however, that the test results in the last several years have indicated a slight but consistent improvement in the writing ability of our entering freshmen. As a result, we shall be able, beginning next fall, to readjust our standards and reduce the proportion of students placed in the remedial course from 32 per cent to about 27 per cent.

Students whose test scores rank in the top 2 or 3 per cent of the entire group are given the option of enrolling in special "honor" sections of English 1, in which we try to adapt instruction to the needs of the superior student. We also extend this option to students whose English scores are not at the top of the list but whose general intelligence, as determined by a different test, is very high.

Although we are reasonably well satisfied with the reliability of the tests we give, we do have a means of correcting inequities: a student in the remedial course may be transferred to a section of the regular three-hour course at any time up to mid-semester if the quality of his writing indicates that he can do the work of the more advanced course without detriment to himself. This past semester, about five per cent of the remedial students were transferred in this way.

ALBERT R. KITZHABER

### Morgan State College

At Morgan State College, the English orientation is a part of a larger program of two weeks. Specifically, the period devoted to English involves the following procedures:

Students are given (1) parts of the Cooperative English Test (higher level edition), the sections on vocabulary, reading and comprehension, and (2) the Iowa Placement Examinations. The to-

tal amount of time allotted for these tests is one hour and twenty minutes. An additional period of ten meetings—forty-five minutes each—is devoted to an intensive study of the library. Although this is not directly a part of the English orientation program, it is ancillary, for it aids in preparing the students to use reference materials in the writing of their investigative papers in English 102. No theme is required as a phase of this examination. All of this takes place during a pre-registration period.

The tests are all machine-scored, and the results are used to section the class. The highest 10 per cent make up the first three sections; the next 70 per cent make up the middle sections; and the lower 20 per cent make the lowest sections. The three highest sections are given considerable supplementary work, whereas the lowest are required to take a two-hour course in reading.

There are no non-credit courses in English at Morgan State College, and students are not moved up or down because of achievement or the lack of it in a section. There is no formal end-of-semester comparison with orientation results.

ROBERT A. SMITH

### Oregon College of Education

At the Oregon College of Education the freshman orientation program in English is planned for approximately 250 students in ten sections. However, the program is not designed for sectioning, but for counseling and planning. The results of tests and student writing are used to discover, as nearly as possible, the ability of each student, his actual performance, and his needs for effective use of English. To accomplish this aim the department uses the scores from entrance tests which are a part of the general pre-registration program of the college, scores from standardized and teacher-made tests given within the de-

partment, student themes written in class, and conferences.

During the first week of classes each instructor assigns a theme to be written in class and administers a test of reading speed and comprehension. By the time this writing is evaluated and the tests are checked, the department has the scores from the entrance tests, indicating each student's ability in a number of areas related to his work in English. With this information the instructor plans his work for the class and prepares for the first of two conferences, held mostly during class hours. Each student is asked to prepare a list of ways in which he feels he can be helped. Together, he and the instructor plan an attack on his individual problems.

Before the second conference near the end of the term, each student takes a standardized, self-checking test on English skills and writes a final theme in class. For this conference the student is asked to list not only the ways in which he needs further help, but also the ways in which he feels that he has improved. Together he and the instructor compare his present performance with that at the first of the term.

This pattern of class-written themes, tests, and conferences is repeated each term.

JANE DALE

### The Pennsylvania State University

The Pennsylvania State University is tenth in size among land grant institutions. Its admission requirements are firm but only moderately strict: students are admitted on the basis of having upper three-fifths high school rank or alternatively by passing admission tests. It follows that entering freshmen vary widely in several respects, including their high school attainment. An unusual feature of the University is separate departments of literature and composition.

During Freshman Orientation Week, after applicants have been granted admission, they are given a series of diagnostic tests by the University and a sectioning test made and administered by the composition department. Results of the composition test (covering spelling, vocabulary, grammar-diction, punctuation) now excuse 10 per cent from taking the regular first-semester composition course, place 25 per cent in a sub-freshman course giving no credit, and distribute the remaining 65 per cent into either regular or superior sections of English Composition 1. During the first two weeks a few students are shifted either up or down between the sub-freshman course and the regular credit course.

A study we recently completed indicates a reasonably close relationship (validity coefficient .52) between student scores on the composition test and the over-all first-semester scholastic performance of these students. There is also good correlation between composition test scores and high school graduation rank. In short, our problems would be reduced to the vanishing point if we were permitted to keep only those students coming from the upper two-fifths of their high schools and also placing in the upper half on the composition test. Another useful piece of evidence would be a theme in addition to the objective test, but the reading load and the shortness of time forced us to discontinue this practice several years ago.

Our experience with composition students might be summarized thus:

1. Really poor students, those who by placement test scores fall into the lowest quartile, tend to remain poor. In fact, 65 per cent in this category leave the University before the end of their seventh semester.

2. Students who come with a reasonable academic edge may do good or

better work in composition and other studies during the first semester and later.

As yet we have found no way of greatly improving upon this law of scholastic gravity, but we keep trying.

KENNETH W. HOUP

### Stephens College

The program in communication at Stephens College reflects the campus-wide emphasis of the College upon individualized instruction. Through its organization, procedures, course content, and teaching methods it seeks to meet major communication needs and interests of students as individuals and as contributing members of society. Its philosophy is based upon a recognition that social responsibility and exercise of individuality are inextricably bound together and that they are conditioned by the need for understanding. The faculty who teach in the program consider that their prime responsibility is to appraise adequately these individual and social needs and interests and to find the most profitable means of caring for them.

The Communication Skills program provides three groups of sections: those for students with varied but average competence in the reading, observing, writing, speaking, and listening aspects of communication; those for students having least competence in comparison with others of the same entering class; those for students whose competence is superior. Within each of these groups, students, according to their individual needs, are assigned to sections having varying degrees of emphasis upon the different aspects of communication. For example, a student in the least competent group works in a section extensively supplemented by work in the non-credit special laboratory services in writing, reading, and speech. An "average" student works first and longest in a section giving primary emphasis to her greatest

weakness and later with primary emphasis on the remaining aspects of communication. A student whose use of language is superior chooses fields such as creative, critical, or journalistic writing; language habits as reflected in modern literature; speech in contemporary life; communication media.

In order to accumulate data for determining placement, a "placement period" is conducted beginning during registration week and extending through four "temporary" class meetings. At the end of this time, the student's two-semester program is decided and she is placed in a "permanent" section. Data gathered include results of the Cooperative English Test of Reading Comprehension, Stephens College Test of Writing Ability, spelling section of the Purdue English Placement Test, Stephens College Test of Listening Ability, a speaking-voice and articulation test, participation in a group discussion, a writing performance test or theme, and a self-analysis of abilities and needs in communication. Some of the above data are machine-processed and some are evaluated necessarily by the faculty.

A student's instructor evaluates progress both through current performance and through re-testing at appropriate times. An elected Planning Committee of the staff undertakes a continued study of evaluation of the effectiveness of the program. It considers and recommends to the staff whatever devices—student ratings, re-testing, workshops, etc.—promise the best results for students taking the course.

In the limited space provided here, it is impossible to present a description of the substance of the course. Its orientation has been stated. With this orientation as a base, the Planning Committee and the staff have evolved general and specific aims which they constantly scrutinize for their efficacy as goals of a basic course in a college program of gen-

eral education. Within these accepted goals, teachers are given maximum freedom to select methods and materials by which they and their students attain them.

RALPH C. LEYDEN

### The Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas

At the beginning of the freshman year at the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, the orientation program in English consists of testing, placement, and correction of misplacement by transfer.

There are three types of freshman English course in the first semester: (1) the normal three-credit one, for average students; (2) an accelerated three-credit one, for superior students, which combines the normal two semesters of freshman English, after which the student substitutes other elective English courses for those usually required; and (3) a no-credit remedial course in writing, which stresses extensive practice and study of fundamentals, for deficient students, who must thereafter still take the normal two semesters of freshman English.

Testing and placement are done during pre-registration freshman orientation week by the Basic Division, not the Department of English. The Basic Division is a non-degree-granting school which handles freshmen until they have completed the first year's work.

Tests used: Cooperative English Test A (Form Z), ACE Psychological Examination (1949 edition), Diagnostic Reading Test, Survey Section (Form C).

Placement is based on results of these tests. Departmental faculty members participate in placement. Students are advised to take the accelerated course if their local-norm percentiles are 90 or above on the Cooperative English test and the linguistic part of the ACE test, and 85 or above on the reading test. Stu-

dents are considered for the remedial course if they drop below the 20th percentile on the Cooperative English test, the 25th on the linguistic part of the ACE test and the reading test. Placement possibilities are presented to students in meetings and individual conferences. About 90 per cent of students accept suggested placements.

During the first three weeks of classes, the Department of English transfers a few students who give evidence of having been misplaced. Such transfer is made on recommendation of the teacher, with the advice of a committee of fellow-teachers.

KARL E. ELMQUIST

### University of Washington

The large number of students at the University of Washington (approximately 2800 take the regular beginning English course during the year) and the mixed faculty of regular staff members and graduate assistants make standard procedures almost mandatory. Thus all entering Freshman English students are directed through the following orientation program:

Before classes begin, students entering Freshman English take only the American Council on Education's machine-graded *English Aptitude Test* over spelling, usage, and vocabulary. All students then enter regular beginning classes without being ranked. At the second class meeting they write an impromptu thirty-five minute paper; at the third they hand in a 300-500 word theme assigned the first day and then write a second impromptu paper. On the basis of aptitude scores and these three papers, all instructors turn over to one reading committee the scores and papers of students they think unready for regular class work, and to another committee the scores and papers of those whose work is superior in mechanical skill, diction, and general maturity. At the fifth class

meeting students are resectioned according to the recommendations of the two reading committees, and work begins. If during the next week a student's work indicates that he is misplaced, his papers are re-submitted.

Roughly twelve per cent, the majority with percentiles between 1 and 15, go into non-credit remedial English classes; eighty-three per cent, with percentiles between 15 and 85, stay in regular sections; and five per cent, with percentiles from 85 to 99, are excused from beginning English and go into advanced sections, earning credit for second quarter work. A student's writing rather than his scores is the final determinant in his placing.

Because the aptitude test scores alone, when weighted slightly (giving spelling less emphasis and usage and vocabulary more), have proved ninety per cent accurate in forecasting student performance, this spring, as an experiment, beginners will be resectioned the first day on the basis of scores alone. A class paper the second day will serve as a check, and the reading committees will recommend advisable changes by the third meeting. All classes will begin the regular work the first rather than the fifth day, with the possibility of a negligible number of shifts the third day.

Because there seems to be no valid basis for comparison in a skill subject like freshman composition when there are such large groups to work with, no end-of-the-quarter comparisons have been made with the beginning-of-quarter aptitude scores except for the Testing Bureau's check, which found the ninety per cent correlation mentioned above.

ELINOR YACGY

#### Western Reserve University

At Western Reserve University the Cooperative Test is given to all entering freshmen during Orientation Week. The

test is administered by the University Testing Service with members of the Freshman English staff serving as proctors. During the first regular meeting of freshman English sections, an impromptu theme is written. A quick grading into "good," "acceptable," and "not acceptable" is made, and themes marked "not acceptable" are turned over for re-reading to a committee which also has the report on the Cooperative Test scores. By the end of the first week, instructors have been given the committee's recommendations, and each student whose chances to succeed in regular English seem doubtful is advised to transfer to a remedial non-credit section. More candidates come into the non-credit sections from the evening, part-time enrollments than from the day-time classes, since these students often are not enrolled as degree candidates and hence are not deterred by the non-credit rating of English 001. We are not permitted to exclude any student from regular English; we can only advise.

It has been our experience that many of the students who make a poor showing in the tests will work harder to stay in regular English, where they have a chance to earn credit, than they would in a non-credit course. Operating on this premise, for several years, students who made a poor showing were required to report one extra hour per week, in addition to the regular three hours per week. This extra hour was used as a laboratory period for rewriting themes or for review of fundamentals. Because of the extra instructional expense involved, the plan was discontinued last year, but the results obtained while the plan was in effect showed that there was much to recommend it.

Also, on the basis of the test results and the impromptu, a few superior students were advanced to the second semester of freshman English and permitted to fulfill their one-year requirement by tak-

ing an advanced composition course or elective writing course, after completing the second semester of the freshman course.

Whatever disposal is made of the poorly prepared freshman, the most important factor—if he is to be helped—is his willing and active cooperation. This will come through encouragement and increasing his self-confidence; and, whether this full cooperation can be secured in a sub-freshman, non-credit course, will always be questionable.

EDITH LAYER

### University of Wisconsin

On the basis of our testing procedure students are divided into four groups:

(1) those exceptionally well trained, who need no further composition training: given total exemption. (Very few fall into this category.)

(2) those well trained, who need one semester of composition training: placed in English 11. (Satisfactory completion of this one-semester course fulfills the Freshman English requirement.)

(3) the great bulk of the class, who need two semesters of composition training: placed in English 1a, to be followed by English 1b.

(4) those exceptionally poorly trained or poorly equipped by nature, who are not in a position to profit at all by composition training on the college level: refused admission to English 1a. (These students are placed in English 0, a non-credit course. After one semester they

may apply again for admission to English 1a.)

Part of our testing procedure occurs during registration week. Entering freshmen spend that week (Monday noon to Saturday noon) attending orientation meetings, talking with their advisers, registering, and taking a battery of objective tests—two of which are useful to us: the ACE and our own Recognition Test. On the basis of the linguistic factor of the ACE and the total score of the Recognition Test, we pick out an upper (top 10-15 per cent) and a lower (approximately bottom 5 per cent) group. On Saturday afternoon of registration week the upper group write a two-hour essay test. These tests are read on Sunday by experienced readers. On Monday of the first class week these students are assigned to the appropriate group [see (1), (2), and (3) above].

All students in the regular course (English 1a) are required to write a fifty-minute theme during the first class hour. At the second class hour instructors inform (a) students whose themes have shown them to be particularly weak and (b) students in the lower group (picked out by the objective tests given during registration week) that they are to report Wednesday or Thursday night of the first class week to write a second fifty-minute theme. Both themes are read by experienced readers. At the third class hour the students are informed that they are admitted to or rejected from English 1a [see (3) and (4) above].

EDGAR W. LACY

# Integration of Composition-Communication with Other Linguistic Studies<sup>1</sup>

## *The Problem of Freshman English: What Are Its Dimensions?*

JOHN H. FISHER<sup>2</sup>

I should like at the outset to go on record as a strict party-man. With my freshmen I have sometimes had occasion to say something about morphemes or intonational patterns, and the analogy of "c'est moi" never fails to interest them. On the whole, however, I have found that freshman English is English, as I suppose French must be French, and structural linguistics an exotic language not yet widely understood. I'm eager for any techniques for closer integration that my fellow panelists or any of you may suggest, and I promise to try them out. But I feel sure that in the long run if we are going to teach English, French, or linguistics, we are going to have to be masters of our subjects and stay pretty close to them.

On the other hand, I believe that we teachers of language and linguistics need acutely to explain to each other and to the public our intentions and our problems. We in the MLA are so convinced of this fact that the Association, over half of whose members teach English (as do MLA Executive Secretary Bill Parker and I), has undertaken an all-out effort to clarify the aims and methods of foreign language teaching to the profession and to the public. The English people in the MLA have done this from no feeling of altruism. Many of the arguments that are being used against the foreign languages could all too easily be

turned against English. The reduction in subject-matter requirements for high school certification that makes it possible for the football coach to teach French with a background of only ten semester hours in college would permit him to teach English with no more. Integration, then, begins with a recognition that we all face the same problems and must either solve them together or go down one after the other.

The first of these problems, and one which language teachers share with all other teachers from kindergarten up, rises out of the tremendous increase in the student population. If your departments, like my own, have been shrinking a little since 1950, you may just now long for the embarrassment that riches will bring. But stop and think for a moment what the figures will mean in the long run. By 1960 we can expect almost a third more students in college. By 1970 two-thirds, or twice as many more. Unless freshman composition ceases to be a requirement, this means upwards of a third more teachers—or classes upwards of a third larger, which I don't like to consider. The problems of staffing and housing will be overwhelming. For instance, we will need from 600 to 700 new college teachers in English every year between now and 1960. In 1952, 284 doctorates in English were granted—less than half the estimated need. In the face of shortages of this magnitude, we are going to need all the cooperation that we can find.

The need for those of us in college

<sup>1</sup> A panel discussion at the Spring, 1954, Meeting of the CCCC, in St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>2</sup> New York University and Modern Language Association; Participating Chairman of the panel.

teaching to join forces and agree on fundamentals is the more pressing because we are facing a critical situation in the high schools. One of the most spectacular achievements of the past twenty-five years has been the development of methods and materials for elementary school teaching. But the danger is that because these methods *have* been so successful, they will now be extended to the high schools and ultimately forced on many colleges. This point of view has been stated explicitly by the Subcommittee on the Revision of the State Certification Code of Michigan, whose recommendations (that would virtually do away with the need for a teacher's majoring in any *subject*) come to a vote in the state legislature this year. The Committee feels "that we are at the point where secondary education is assuming a trend toward the integrated program, making instructional processes and the nature of secondary education more similar to elementary education." Concerning the preparation of teachers at all levels through junior college, "it was generally felt that we are also at the point where, with certain precautions, we can now educate the general practitioner in the teaching profession, leaving specialization to the graduate schools."

The mastering of "communication skills" or "language arts" is, of course, central to the "integrated program." But we should be wary of extending this concept of the language teacher's function through high school and into college. We can only lose in the end by so spreading our objectives. I wonder whether we are aware of how much we have lost already. Until I was preparing for this panel, I believed that teaching English composition in college was a fairly recent innovation, and that its rise could be related to the democratization of college education which between 1900 and 1950 raised from four to twenty-eight the percentage of the 18-21-year-old pop-

ulation in college—with consequent lowering of standards for admission. I looked for some historical study which would bear this out, but could find almost no history (a gap we should certainly fill). The catalogs of New York University, at least, tell a different story. Beginning with 1840 their course of study provides for exercises in English composition for *all* students in the freshman and sophomore years, with written forensic discussions and original declamations in the junior and senior years. This pattern continues with little variation into the 1890's, generally beginning—and this is significant—in the *second* term of the freshman year. Obviously this English composition was not regarded as merely remedial, something the student might be excused from completely if he were well prepared, or get over as quickly as possible if he were not. I detect the remedial concept emerging in the catalog in 1893 when the names of two instructors suddenly make their appearance and rhetorical exercises are introduced in the first and second term of the freshman year. By 1895 the freshman course is called English composition and the present pattern is established. This is the history in only one university, though I gather it is substantially the same at the University of Pennsylvania, and perhaps elsewhere. If it were borne out widely, it would suggest that since 1900 with the increasing enrolments and encroachment of other subjects we have been content with lower objectives and less time for English composition, just as we have for the modern foreign languages. With the enrolments again on the upsurge, with well-trained teachers hard to come by, and a "leave your language alone" tendency discernible in our own ranks, we could find ourselves shortly left with only sub-freshman English for retarded students.

Our second problem has to do with the internal rather than the external di-

mensions of freshman English. What scope and objectives can we realistically set ourselves, and set forth for our students and their parents? I have been interested to discover how fully we share this problem with our colleagues who teach the foreign languages. Perhaps it is inherent in a language course, since language is only a *form* and the facts and ideas have all been pre-empted by other courses. "Voici ma tête" and "voilà le livre" may distinguish French locatives, just as "while shaving the cat walked into the bathroom" a dangling participle, but this sort of drivel makes recitation intolerable. Traditionally the content of language courses, English and foreign, has been literary, largely perhaps because from the time of the old classical curriculum the teachers were trained in that medium. The broadening view of the function of language has led away from this literary orientation to the point where the *English Language Arts* finds it the "main objective" of the English teacher to help his students become proficient enough in the use of verbal skills "to enable them to be effective defenders and preservers of the democratic tradition" (p. 144). Likewise the foreign language teacher has come increasingly to justify his work in terms of the development of international understanding. These are laudable objectives—in which other departments also have a certain understandable interest. But to what extent are we fulfilling them? I don't know whether social scientists have been asked to comment on the *English Language Arts*, but some of them have studied the claims of foreign language teachers. Last year as part of its Foreign Language Program the MLA sponsored a seminar at the University of Michigan in which Albert Marckwardt brought together four language teachers, a linguistic scientist, an anthropologist, a social psychologist, and a historian. For a month these nine went through the text-

books now in use and pondered the extent to which, and the methods by which, the foreign language course could teach cultural understanding. You have probably seen their report, printed in the December [1953] *PMLA*. They concluded that "none of the existing texts attempts to present cultural insights in terms of linguistic structure" (p. 1200), and "they appear on the whole to lack sufficiently clear focus upon the relevant aspects of the foreign culture as contrasted with the student's own experience and value systems" (p. 1202).

If foreign language texts are a hodge-podge (I venture so to interpret the careful language of the report), what would the social scientists think of the readings in the normal freshman English course as systematic defense of the democratic tradition? As the Interdisciplinary Seminar Report makes clear, the social scientists have developed to a high degree techniques for classifying and analyzing values. If this is now to be also our business, we can certainly profit by their methods. But even before that, if we really mean to make language teaching socially relevant, all of us who teach language are going to have to learn just what relation there is between cultural insights and linguistic structure. In this limbo the guideposts have not even been set, although the linguists may be developing a useful method in "metalinguistics."

And finally, if this practical social orientation is the real business of our language courses, how is it to be integrated with the critical and literary values we originally sought? I hope that I have made it clear that I believe the integration of freshman English with other linguistic studies is no easy and mechanical matter. There are pressures, some of our own making, that could force both English composition and foreign languages down or out, or make them auxiliaries to the social sciences. Integration must be-

gin with mutual understanding and mutual concern—with exactly the sort of dis-

cussion we are having here this morning.

## *Deepening the Impression: Integration with Foreign Language Study*

THOMAS R. PALFREY<sup>1</sup>

Although the English teacher and the teacher of foreign languages are engaged in very similar and closely related tasks—working the two sides of the same street, as it were—the literature on the subject reveals surprisingly little communication between them, little conscious correlation of their efforts, little evidence of mutual support and assistance.

Nearly every statement of the objectives and values of foreign language study for the past sixty or seventy years has stressed the contribution made by foreign language study to "better understanding and appreciation of the English language," or "increased ability in the accurate and intelligent use of English," or some such phrase.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps one of the most categorical statements of the matter is one made by Hayward Keniston, recently president of the MLAA, some fifteen years ago:

It has been the experience of centuries, and it is no less true today, that the understanding of one's own native language is greatly enriched by the study of other languages. The reasons are many. First of all, such a study provides a perspective, by offering comparisons of identity or divergence of expression. It awakens the mind to a consciousness of distinctions in meaning made possible by differences in form or

function; it sharpens the sense of values in word meanings through associations with foreign cognates; it encourages a more precise and careful articulation in speech by providing a basis of comparison with other tongues. The foreign language teacher is the chief ally of the teacher of English.<sup>3</sup>

If foreign language teachers are agreed on any single proposition, it is that foreign language study does, in some way or another, improve the student's English, however that may be defined or ascertained. Administrators and educationists are inclined to agree, if only tentatively and with notable lack of enthusiasm, English teachers are sometimes willing to give corroborative, though impressionistic, evidence; and the students themselves will admit, when pressed, that they have learned their English grammar and a certain proportion of their vocabulary through foreign language study. Furthermore, the records of students who enter universities where an elaborate battery of entrance examinations is set up show that those who enter with seven years of language credit make higher scores on their English tests than those who enter with six, and so on down the line to those who enter with only two years of a foreign language—Spanish, for instance—whose knowledge of English is more apt than not to be somewhat defective. Unfortunately for our thesis, it must be pointed out that the scores on the entrance examinations

<sup>1</sup> Northwestern University

<sup>2</sup> For a fuller discussion of the subject, see the author's article, "The Contribution of Foreign Language Study to Mastery of the Vernacular," *Modern Language Journal*, XXV (1941), 550-557, reprinted in Maxim Newmark, *Twentieth Century Modern Foreign Language Teaching: Sources and Readings* (New York, 1948), pp. 265-273.

<sup>3</sup> "Underlying Principles of Foreign Language Study," *Modern Language Journal*, XXII (1938), 483-484.

in English are almost always as closely correlated with the IQ's as with the number of credits in foreign languages. The question therefore seems to be: Do the brighter students take more language work, or does taking more language work make them so?

For all the general agreement among foreign language teachers that they contribute materially to "an increased ability in the accurate and intelligent use of English" on the part of their students, very few of the experimental attempts to demonstrate objectively what they all so firmly believe have yielded altogether convincing results. Why should the conclusions drawn from experimental data fail to support the considered opinion of large numbers of competent observers? In the first place, none of the investigations appears to have been carried out with enough students, over a long enough time, in enough different places, to be statistically valid. In the second place, the construction of the tests left much to be desired, technically, in nearly every case. In the third place, the proper analysis and evaluation of results obtained demand an excessively complicated differentiation according to age, sex, IQ, previous or concomitant linguistic training in the foreign languages as well as the vernacular, and so on. Moreover, the wide variety in cultural background and in secondary school training, the enormous differences in educational experience at the college level due to the elective system and to highly individual instruction, the great variations in discipline, stimuli, amounts and types and methods of course work from department to department and instructor to instructor—all these factors introduce so many variables as to render statistical analysis of any validity well-nigh impossible.

Upon one point, however, the various investigators come to a fairly general

and, I think, significant conclusion: namely, that the incidental or collateral objective—that is, improvement of the vernacular—is not necessarily automatic, but is apt to bear a close relationship to course content and method, as well as to English study proper. As the famous Coleman report pointed out: "If improvement in the knowledge of English is a desirable and valid objective, means must be devised by which this aim may be realized."<sup>4</sup>

This should suggest two courses of action to the foreign language teacher: first, the desirability of conferring and planning with the English teacher, so as to work out a joint, coordinated and mutually helpful attack on the problem; and second, the advisability of re-examining both the objectives and the accomplishments of the aural-oral method which has enjoyed such a vogue since the war.

As for the first, the foreign language teacher would be well advised to ask the English teacher—as well as his colleagues in other departments by whose suffrage the foreign language requirement, such as it is, exists—precisely what purposes foreign language study is believed to serve and what skills the student is expected to acquire—and then orient his efforts to their attainment.

As for the second, it may well be that the present tendency of a certain school of foreign language teachers to avoid the use of English in the classroom not only fails to develop the student's ability to read the foreign language with such speed, comprehension and accuracy as to make it a really reliable and serviceable tool, but also reduces materially his opportunity to extend and sharpen his knowledge of his mother tongue.

It is clear that neither the English teacher nor the teacher of foreign lan-

<sup>4</sup> Algernon Coleman, *The Teaching of Modern Foreign Languages in the United States* (New York, 1929), p. 16.

guages can do everything that is now expected of him in the limited time at his disposal. To the skills traditionally accepted until recently as the proper and practicable objectives of the first two years of foreign language study, have been added a whole series of desiderata, starting with some notions of the general nature of language, a knowledge of the geography, history and institutions of the foreign country, an understanding of the folkways of its people, a familiarity with its arts and crafts, at least a bowing acquaintance with a few representative samples of its literature, and ending, of course, with the ability to speak the language with ease, accuracy and distinction, "like a native," in fact.

A somewhat cursory *depouillement* of your pedagogical literature suggests that you encounter the same multiplicity of demands in the English field, the net result of which is no doubt much the same as it is with us in the foreign languages, that is, to dilute our courses, to disperse our efforts over a greater and greater number of objectives, and inevitably to develop a lower level of accomplishment in certain of the traditional skills.

A good many years ago I was so fortunate as to have the opportunity to observe the instruction in English in a number of representative French lycees. The most striking difference between the attitude of the instructor in English there, and the instructor in a foreign language here, was the Frenchman's evident consciousness—in fact, his insistence—that he was teaching his own as well as the foreign language. Outside of certain exercises designed to develop aural-oral skills—dictation, reading aloud, recitation of memorized passages, etc.,—the classroom work appeared to be devoted largely to translation of the most exacting sort, both from English to French and from French to English. The search for

exact equivalents and connotations, the discussion of roots, derivations, prefixes and suffixes, related words and idiomatic expressions, the definition of grammatical terms and functions, the differentiation between the formal and the familiar, the literary and the colloquial, all served to focus attention almost equally on the two languages. At least half the effort was clearly directed to extending and deepening and sharpening the student's knowledge of his own language.

In this country, the improvement in the American student's English which accrues from his study of a foreign language is probably somewhat less than if this were set up as one of the principal objectives, as in France. Furthermore, there is undoubtedly still less improvement when the instructor himself speaks English imperfectly or forbids its use in the classroom. In any event, this improvement in English is extremely difficult to prove objectively; and it is apt to be compromised not only by the exclusive use of the foreign language in the classroom, but also by loading the elementary courses with all sorts of informative and diverting materials which may have little relevance to the business of mastering the language. The old fashioned *Sprachmeister* is now expected to be not only a linguistic scientist, anthropologist, historian, economist and sociologist, but also a cultural propagandist, a preacher of peace through the spoken word, and an apostle of the universal brotherhood of man. Nevertheless, consciously or unconsciously, the foreign language teacher will undoubtedly continue to contribute both directly and indirectly to the student's knowledge of his own language and to his appreciation of its literature.

In view of the fact that English and the foreign languages are both concerned with language and literature, and that a very obvious parallelism exists between

the materials, the methods and the objectives of the two disciplines, it is somewhat surprising that experiments in correlating English with other subjects have turned to art, to speech, to the social sciences, and even to the natural sciences rather than to the foreign languages. Once the English teacher realizes that the difference in languages is not a barrier at all, but rather a means of offering the student a fresh perspective on linguistic phenomena and of focussing his attention upon similarities and differences in form, function and meaning, he will undoubtedly be able to suggest many ways in which foreign language study can be brought to contribute even more effectively to the improvement of the student's English than it now does.

For his part, the teacher of foreign languages would be extremely grateful to his colleague in English in a number of ways. As a basis for language study proper, it would be most helpful if the student were given a sound working knowledge of English grammar, syntax and structure, together with a fair command of the terminology used in this area; if he were trained to read English prose and poetry aloud with proper enunciation, intonation, stress, phrasing, and so on; and if he were compelled to develop a really precise and discriminating vocabulary, no matter how limited. In the field of literature, it would greatly facilitate the foreign language teacher's task if the student were given certain simple but definite notions about literary forms, techniques, means and objectives, along with a vocabulary adequate for the discussion of literary matters; if he were helped to acquire a more extensive knowledge of the Bible and, if possible, some familiarity with classical mythology; and if he were encouraged to develop an awareness of the intellectual community of Western European cul-

ture, of which we are a part, through more frequent reference to and explanation of the impact and cross influence of foreign languages and literatures on our own.

I am convinced that a joint survey of what we are now doing separately, a methodical re-examination of objectives and methods and materials in English and in the foreign languages, would reveal many ways in which we might co-ordinate our efforts to our mutual advantage and to the great benefit of our students.

If you are not altogether satisfied with present-day levels of proficiency in English attained upon completion of high school or junior college, it is quite possible that the tremendous decline in foreign language study may have a great deal to do with the matter. William R. Parker, Executive Secretary of the MLAA, recently pointed up the situation with some rather alarming figures:

By 1915, more than 40 per cent of the total high-school population were studying modern languages. A few years ago it was not quite 14 per cent. Today, the statisticians tell us, fewer than nine per cent of all young people in all our schools and colleges are enrolled in a class in a modern foreign language.<sup>5</sup>

May I suggest that it might be the part of intelligent self-interest to give active support to the Foreign Language Program now being carried on by the MLAA with the collaboration of several other professional societies, generally, in doing anything you can to strengthen the position of the foreign languages in the curriculum at both the secondary and the collegiate levels, and, specifically, in helping to restore the foreign language requirements for entrance and for graduation.

<sup>5</sup> "The Language Curtain," *Modern Language Journal*, XXXVIII (1954), 3-6.

## ***Broadening the Horizon: Cultural Values in Freshman English***

KATHRINE KOLLER<sup>1</sup>

We teachers of Freshman English are a self-critical and dissatisfied group. This comes in part from a great desire to do effective teaching, a sense of our sins of omission, and the frustrations which come from trying to do too many things. We are only too conscious of the fact that Freshman English is for many students the only course which offers them any contact with the disciplines of communication, a knowledge of language, and, in our despair, an acquaintance with a few pieces of literature, or an anthology of "readings for our times." I shall not waste tears over the limitations of secondary school education or quarrel with the problems arising from a visual-minded illiteracy of a generation of T.V. watchers. Let us keep our minds on our fundamental problem of teaching. And what is teaching but educating the students; and what is education but a leading them out from their ignorance toward a maturity which comes in part from the knowledge, the wisdom, and the disciplines which our colleges and universities can offer? Education does not stop with a degree, it continues until death gives a final *dismissus est*. Some poor students never learn more than the minimum needed for existence; others find life a continuous revelation of knowledge. Teachers of Freshman English can only set the students on their way. Our greatest obligation is not, I believe, to achieve perfection, but to offer the best discipline and the richest material for study. And it is my aim in this short talk to remind you of the place and value of great literature in a freshman course.

When a freshman enters college, he is ignorant and, thank heaven, he is usually

eager. He knows what seems to some of us an amazing number of things, but he is fundamentally ignorant in all that pertains to himself and to his fellows. He conceives of himself as unique; he is unaware of his common share in the experiences of life; and he is very hazy about the ideas that center around abstract concepts. Oftentimes we complain about the poverty of the freshman themes, but actually no one can write about ideas or the meaning of experience when one has few ideas and has never been taught to read meaning into the experiences which he does have.

First, literature should have a place early in a college curriculum because it has a special power in teaching men to know men and to evaluate man's experience. Such knowledge as literature imparts is one of the important factors in a student's growth to maturity. In a great poem, a drama, or a novel, the artist invites us to examine the lives of others; we see human beings like ourselves in action and we know their innermost thoughts. Here exist none of the inhibitions which prevent us from knowing our daily acquaintances or keep us from revealing ourselves to our selves. As we look on the revealed motives, actions and thoughts of the characters created by the writer, we dare to look upon ourselves and our fellows with understanding. Many times we have heard a freshman say: "That is just what I felt but I never could say it." A boy reads "Michael" and tells me that he had never realized before what emotions his father had, because he had never understood him. A foreign student reads "The Deserted Village" and recognizes the universal nostalgia for former and half-forgotten places. No girl I have ever known fails

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to be delighted by the reflection of herself and her mother, in Chaucer's *Pertelote*. Chaucer, Sophocles, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Swift, Faulkner, Orwell, Dickens, Dostoevsky, Browning, Dante, Milton, to select names at random, hold the mirror of life up to us. Here students see themselves, their families and ultimately the pattern of the whole human race and their own indissoluble ties with it.

In the second place, literature constantly reveals the richness and complexity of life which can not be fitted into a single mold. Sometimes the literary artist shows us the inner struggle of the soul, sometimes he takes us with the character as he battles the outer forces of the world; sometimes we see ourselves in the familiar comedy of every day; sometimes we are aware of the dignity and nobility of man in tragedy, but so elevated and so great that we recognize only those potentialities in our own unfilled experiences. Like Walter Mitty we grasp in literature what we conceived of only in our dreams. After the enrichment which comes from a contact with the miracle of human experience which the writer has presented to us, how can a student keep from asking and answering a hundred questions? Literature not only shows human beings in action but it also raises questions about those actions: why do men suffer unjustly? A freshman who reads *Oedipus Rex* asks why should Oedipus who was a "good joe" suffer when he had consciously done no wrong. Can a man get something for nothing or will he reap what he has sown? What is justice? How great are a man's obligations to others? Are courage, wisdom, temperance, and justice the marks of a great human being? Is life tragic—or comic? Our students may not ask all these questions but they will ponder some of them. The answers have been made in the literature each has read; he may challenge them and rebel against

them, but grapple with them he must. And this grappling to comprehend is the beginning of wisdom, the step to maturity. Moreover it is better to struggle with these ideas than to write a dull essay on "my summer vacation."

I think Swift's classic allegory of the spider and the bee applies here. When students have nothing to say, they cannot write. Let us first offer them a source of ideas expressed in a form which compels their attention in a way that newspaper editorials or essays in anthologies rarely do. Why turn to the average or the mediocre when we have the best of all human expression at our command? Anti-intellectualism can only be combated by creating an interest in the things of the mind. Nor can the study of language be separated from the ideas of great writers in that language.

In the third place literature demands a place in a freshman course in English because it can awaken an appreciation of the beauty of form and begin the development of a taste for the genuine as opposed to the easy and meretricious. Literature is the expression of ideas and characters; it has its significance because it presents in order and beauty the meaning of the chaotic experiences of life. It is the exact expression of realized values. Freshmen are remarkably unaware and unobserving and the process of education involves increasing their awareness and pointing out what to observe. The structure of a play such as *Oedipus* which commands their attention and arouses their emotions leads to an awareness of the effectiveness of unity and the importance of the relevant; the formal architectonics of a poem such as "The Eve of St. Agnes," the design of a Shakespearean sonnet or the power of a single ironic image to determine the unity of a poem by Housman, can awaken not only the taste but also a sense of the importance of form in determining

the effectiveness of all communication whether it be in literature or painting, sculpture or engineering.

Form, structure, style, tone, genre are matters which interest a literary critic, but they also have meaning for a freshman as he sees the relationship between the effect the poem or novel has on him and the careful discipline and the wise selection the author has exercised in order to present his characters saying exactly the right word and doing the inevitable deed which the nature of the situation demands. This is not to say that because a student can see the importance of form in a work of art, he writes a better essay, a kind of *quid pro quo*. But our experience in freshman composition has shown over and over again that the freshman writes much better papers after he has been studying great literature than before he has begun to read, experience and look at the works of great writers.

In the fourth place literature is an essential part of a freshman's education because it presents him with ideals. Individuals and nations which have no certain ideals are doomed. They perish before the power of those who have such visions. "To destroy the western tradition of independent thought," said a former college chancellor, "it is not necessary to burn books; all we have to do is to leave them unread for a couple of generations." The psalmist was right when he said where there is no vision the people perish. Over the door of the building which houses the Department of Justice, is this inscription: "Justice in the life and conduct of the State is possible only if it resides in the hearts and souls of its citizens."

We begin to build a better world only as we build better individuals. There are indeed many areas of need for social amelioration, but the greatest need is the need for a spiritual awakening. "If

wars are made in the minds of men," then peace too is the product of our minds and wills. To quote from Professor Baugh in his presidential address at the Boston meeting of the MLA:

"To humanize, to promote the spiritual qualities which separate man's aspirations from the brutes, is the function of the humanities. In the ability to shape the mind, form character, to direct the feelings, I know of no more potent instrument than great literature. This is one of the sources of its power and one of its functions."

We talk of our responsibility to train the young to communicate; let us not ignore our equally great responsibility to let the great writers communicate with the young. To withhold this privilege is evidence of timidity on our part, of distrust of greatness, and an admission of past failures. We probably have failed dozens of times; we have often been more successful than we know; "not failure but low aim is crime." And I believe a teacher can lead his students out of ignorance toward knowledge and even toward wisdom. If Freshman English is the only course which brings some students in touch with the problems of expression or communication, it seems to me that we are all making a fatal and dangerous mistake if we fail to introduce him to the riches of the great human documents known as literature. To fail to give in our Freshman English courses a generous introduction to great literature is to impoverish the student's mind and heart, to limit his horizon, to settle for the immediate and to compromise the future. On the English teacher falls heavily the responsibility of sustaining the great tradition of the importance of the human individual. The tragic events of our century have tended to dehumanize us and to make us consider mankind as masses to be moved by the will of a minority, more often bestial than hu-

mane, in its attitude toward its fellows. As society becomes aware of the dangers inherent in this approach to life, it looks again for the individual, rich in sympathy and understanding, sure of his values, and courageous in their support. The teaching of this knowledge and these values lies, in a great measure, in the hands of the teacher of English. But he must be prepared to know the application of the arts to society and to the fulfillment of the individual's needs. He must face the moral and aesthetic questions of literature as well as the discipline of linguistic science, and the meth-

od of communication. Like Chaucer's poor parson, he must know his role in society but first practice it himself. In the tradition of the early humanists like Erasmus, he must be the sage and citizen of the world who knows literature and languages and who teaches with patience and enthusiasm the practical application of this ideal to students. The founders of this country were the direct inheritors and practical users of the great humane concept of the individual. If this attitude is lost, then indeed all is lost before the barbarian invasion of mechanistic mass production of thoughtless specimens of life.

### *And Now the Tailor: Trimming Ideals to Fit the Situation*

ROBERT M. ESTRICH<sup>1</sup>

I think I do not really approve of Professor John H. Fisher. It betrays an appalling cynicism in a discussion leader to turn the final speech of a panel of this sort over to a department chairman. To call him the *tailor* is even worse, because, of course, it is so dreadfully true. A chairman spends so much of his time trimming his own and other people's ideals to fit situations—or more precisely—to fit the budget-making which is called university policy, that the symbol he will wear through purgatory will be a pair of shears skewered through his heart. But since tailor is what I am called, tailor I am, and here I cut.

When Mr. Fisher gave his figures of the enrollments we are to expect in the future, and indicated that our graduate schools cannot, as at present set up, begin to fill the need, he suggested only one of the problems we are going to have to face.

Getting teachers and housing them and their students, even paying them gi-

gantic sums of money—though not so much as they are going to need—is merely the starting point. At Ohio State, where for the last two years we have found our freshman class increasing by 500 a year, where shortly the rate of increase will itself increase, and where our top administration talks blandly about 40,000 day-school students in full regular attendance by 1970, we can go to the legislature and say "You must give us money and buildings." And we will get something of what we need. But how, even if we get vast amounts of money, are we going to keep from developing a staff of composition slaves? The answer that American colleges and universities have traditionally given is that what with the normal attrition of people dropping out of the profession and the normal amount of death and retirement and the normal amount of slow expansion we've been used to, we could offer rather easily a varied and interesting teaching program to a young man or woman starting in our profession. If they fitted our

<sup>1</sup> The Ohio State University

standards, if teaching was really their proper vocation, we could offer something exciting and attractive.

But let us be quite candid. A steady diet of 9 or 12 hours of teaching in one essentially remedial area, grading 60 to 100 themes a week, does not in time just pall on a lively and sensitive mind. It can kill it. And let us honestly admit, too, that for 80 per cent of our students the first-year course is precisely remedial. The implications of Mr. Fisher's notes on the history of English composition at N.Y.U. are quite correct. Profoundly as we all believe in the values of Professor Koller's fine statement, much as we hope that linguistic science can enrich our understanding of what we are doing and our techniques for doing it, we are still having to cope with a discipline in its halting, impoverished, and elementary forms. When Professor Palfrey very soundly suggested that the English teacher could help the teacher of languages, what did he ask for? I quote again what he has just called "most helpful": ". . . a sound working knowledge of English grammar, syntax, and structure, together with a fair command of the terminology used in this area"; the ability "to read English prose and poetry with proper enunciation, intonation, stress, phrasing, and so on; . . . and a vocabulary precise and discriminating, no matter how limited." Now I know that Professor Palfrey asks for more than that—he even mentions classical mythology—but these things which he pleads for first simply assume that our job is elementary.

Let me return to Ohio State. We offer in the English Department something over 160 sections a quarter of our freshman combined - reading - and - writing courses. We offer at the same time, including our graduate seminars, less than one-fourth as many sections of all the other courses in the department put to-

gether. I resolutely and ashamedly refuse to give you the percentage of our staff who are wholly employed in teaching those freshman courses. But this I will tell you. There is not the least chance in the world of working out for most of them a really varied teaching assignment.

The college English teachers in Ohio got a thorough shock last April when our association, in its annual meeting, decided to study the English major. After a careful survey of the colleges in the state, we found that for all of us our English majors, and, I remind you, the courses they take and that we teach, had fallen off until, despite our increase in total college enrollment, we actually had fewer majors than we had in the 1930's. That was not just true of the state schools with their multiple technical colleges. It was equally true of those superb Arts colleges, with their fine tradition of work in the humanities, in which Ohio is so rich. I think I know the reason. The modern college has now so many interesting, exciting—and remarkably well-publicized—areas to major in that probably only a few of the older disciplines get as large a percentage of majors as they did only a short time ago. But, be that as it may, it cuts down our chance for a rich variety.

Moreover, all over the country schools are doing what we are doing in Ohio. Under the impact of our needs for specialization every college is developing some kind of humanities program. In place of the old simple requirement of some courses in literature in English or foreign languages, the humanities requirement tends to set up areas to include choices in the literatures, music, the fine arts, the social sciences, etc., and so on. Now this is not educationally speaking bad. Well constructed, these programs are often very good indeed, and educationally very wise. We want our own *majors* to have them. But, again, I must point out that they can narrow

what have been our own peculiar opportunities for our own staffs.

One more item in this survey. I have talked with a large number of the chairmen of English departments of the other very large schools of the Middle West. They all find the same problem in their own departments growing out of the same structure. And the smaller schools too feel the pinch.

Now—bluntly—I am afraid of it. And this is why. Right now, we are still coming fairly close to dealing with it by the traditional means. Year by year we do it less well. By the time we double and triple our number of freshman sections, we shall have got ourselves giant departments with a broad base and a rapidly narrowing pyramid on top. Our alternatives in the selection of our slaves will be, as things now stand, vast numbers of young, unformed, technically (and sometimes intellectually) poor graduate assistants or other varieties of teachers in training. Or, what is even worse, the tired, bored, depressed hack who repeats each year the same communications or composition course that he gave the year before, his greatest professional excitement being his collection of student boners or fighting with his supervisor because he is so tired of the handbook that he craves a chance for a tantrum.

My colleagues today have asked—and even indicated some of the ways it is to be had—for rich, informed, scholarly, and vital teaching. They want it in the freshman course. They tell us there are ways even of doing our remedial job better, by making our students aware of the wealth of art, the meanings of a great culture, the value of knowing language. I think they were not considering the sensitive instructor who came in to see me this week. He had been brooding over a sentence in a theme which stated with a sublimely insane logic which I hope worries you as much as it does me,

"When a man is trapped, he's trapped, and vice versa." My panel colleagues were not thinking of just how many years a teacher can take that sort of thing.

What the teacher needs who is going to grow steadily in the knowledge, perception, and skill we ask for, what the good teacher of *The Language Arts* needs to keep him alive is variety, plus the chance to develop something of his own that he can really dig into and work his mind over. If he does not have that intellectual refreshment, feel the growth that comes with it—and get the reward from the world that should accompany it—he dwindles. He can mark papers for period faults. He can swing students through a limp discussion group. But where he lives will be his garden, his wood-working shop, or the beer joint off the campus.

What he has to have is the chance to teach something more than just his freshman courses. All over the country universities are hunting for teachers who will form a solid, trained core to inspire and discipline their composition staffs, and everywhere those same departments are trying to find special niches to place those good people in so that they won't become solely composition teachers. Some schools have quite separate composition and communication staffs. I cannot count how many times I have received letters from young men and women teaching in them asking me to help them get out. When a man is trapped he's trapped—and they know it. The better communications teachers they are, the nearer they represent what has been proposed here this morning, the more desperate they are to get to where they don't have to be limited to that one thing exclusively. They may delight in teaching a freshman course, and be proud of it, but they simply must have something more too.

If we are to have these values that we have this morning outlined, we are going

to be forced to give our best intelligence and our greatest wisdom not just to finding the all too few good teachers and paying and housing them. We are also going to have to create for them profes-

sional ways of life that are not to be easily come by in this brave new world.

I hope you do not find this cynical, but the tailor has cut his cloth, and he finds it a little skimpy.

## Usage and Meaning

ROBERT J. GEIST<sup>1</sup>

Before the "usage vs. correctness" battle gives way entirely to the "structure vs. traditional grammar" battle, I should like to scout an area where "correctness" appears to have "usage" on the defensive. This area includes the concern over the "correct" meaning of *disinterested* as well as this engaging sentence:

Accuracy in the use of these [foreign] terms is determined not by careless oral expression but by appeal to written usage . . .<sup>2</sup>

Since *careless* slightly prejudices the issue, one is tempted to retort that accuracy is not determined by careless written expression either. But a retort here will not do, for the statement expresses the honest fear of many teachers that the nonauthoritarian ideas of "usage people" will undermine the precise use of words, that a doctrine of usage condones or actively promotes fuzzy dictation and fuzzy meanings. I cannot share this fear.

At the risk of getting stuck on the sticky subject of meaning, I think it can safely be stated that a word means what a speaker intends it to mean and what a hearer interprets it to mean.<sup>3</sup> In the event intention and interpretation differ, a realistic appeal can be made only to the intention and interpretation of people—in other words, to usage. One can

assume, I suppose, that there is a "real" meaning which has no relation to what people intend or interpret, but I find nothing to support this assumption and no usefulness in it. In reconciling differing intentions and interpretations, one may make the startling discovery that a meaning can be very vague or very specific or that a single word may have several meanings. One can make the same discovery on almost any page of a dictionary. The word *phoneme*, for example, has a very specific meaning because it is used with this meaning by linguists. The word *work* is used with specific meanings by physicists; it is used with more general meanings by physicists and others in nonphysics contexts. A person who observes the actual usage of people will

<sup>3</sup> This statement, of course, says only that the meaning of a word is the meaning of that word. A more significant definition may be quoted from Bloch and Trager's *Outline of Linguistic Analysis* (1942), p. 6: "The meaning of a linguistic form . . . is the feature common to all the situations in which it is used." Since, however, the present paper merely objects to the proposition that the meaning of a word is not the meaning of that word, the statement as given will do. A further quotation from Bloch and Trager (p. 7) states the essential thesis of this paper: "All these words [horse, cheval, Pferd; bowwow, gnaf-gnaf, wanwan] are equally appropriate, since all are equally arbitrary. It is convention alone—a kind of tacit agreement among the members of a social group—that gives any word its meaning. This elementary truth, which no one disputes after a moment's reflection, is nevertheless often forgotten by students of a foreign language." And, we may add, sometimes by others intent on the real meaning of a word.

<sup>1</sup> Michigan State College

<sup>2</sup> College English, XIV (Oct., 1952), 37.

no more advocate the general meaning of *work* in a physics context—or an anomalous meaning of *phoneme* in a linguistic context—than he will advocate a nonstandard *ain't* in a paper that is intended to pass as standard English.

To elaborate a bit, if a hearer takes a word to mean what the speaker intends, the idea "gets across," the two persons understand one another. A hearer, obviously, may take the word to mean something other than what the speaker intends. The two do not understand one another. Now how do we decide who is "right" about the meaning? In a given situation, of course, both can be right or both can be wrong. Learning the right meaning is of practical importance. That is, unless misunderstanding is the goal (as it sometimes is), hearer and speaker must get together regarding meaning. Hearer or speaker may take a very authoritarian view—"my meaning is the right meaning"—and the chances of their getting together are reasonably negligible. For a while one may "pull rank" on his children or very young students, but he beguiles only himself if he thinks the process attacks the problem of meaning realistically or effectively—in or out of the classroom. It was Humpty Dumpty, we may recall, who answered Alice's objection to his definition of *glory* by replying that a word meant just what he chose it to mean and it was simply a question of who was to be master, that's all.

Or, as previously noted, one may assume that there is a "real" meaning which has no relation to what people intend or interpret. The assumption is sometimes used pedagogically—with baneful results. About twenty-five years ago I was first told that if I said, "If I couldn't swim and tipped over my canoe three miles from shore, I would drown," I would *really* be saying, "I want to drown." I heard this assertion most re-

cently about two years ago. Nonsense dies hard. No speaker I know would so intend the sentence and no hearer so interpret it. Incidentally, the *should* being sought in this sentence in the name of correctness has two possible meanings—which speech will keep separate, and hence unambiguous, far more successfully than writing will.

Finally, one may—and in practice usually does—look for the right meaning in the intention of the speaker and the interpretation of the hearer. In a given situation speaker and hearer may actually try to get together—"Just what do you mean by—?" Or they may appeal to other persons—especially the people who compile dictionaries. In these compendiums of usage speaker and hearer may find the common meaning they need in order to understand one another. Again they may not—since a word or meaning may have come into being since the dictionary went to press and since the people compiling dictionaries are fallible like the rest of us. Speaker and hearer may also find that the originally divergent intention and interpretation are both recorded—hardly a surprising discovery, since multiple meanings for a single word are frequent. Apparently when one becomes insistent about the *real* meaning, he is likely to forget what he otherwise knows very well—that a word often has several meanings. Is the usage advocate guilty of urging vagueness and wooliness of diction then simply because he recognizes that various meanings are actually used? He's being just about as wildly romantic, it seems to me, as dictionaries are.

The word *disinterested* is a present shibboleth of "correctness." How present is indicated by a paragraph in a recent *Atlantic Monthly* (September, 1954, p. 56), where the use of *disinterested* as a synonym for *uninterested* is belabored in strong language: "the wickedest of steals," "this crime . . . committed . . . by

'intellectuals' who know better," "this unscrupulous steal," and "outrages." *Disinterested* means *impartial*, so the argument goes, and anyone who uses it to mean *uninterested* or *bored* just doesn't know what the real meaning is and, what's worse, he's corrupting the language. Some of us get dreadfully worried about the possible ambiguity of the phrase *a disinterested judge*. Before one decides that this word has only one meaning—or one *real* meaning and a debased recent meaning—one would do well to look at various dictionaries, including the ACD, various Webster's, Samuel Johnson's, and the OED. The original vocabulary of the OED, for example, cites quotations from about 1612 (Donne), 1684, and 1767 for the meaning "not interested, unconcerned"; it labels the meaning as questionably obsolete. The Supplement, with three quotations from 1928, tells us to remove obsolete from the original entry. Incidentally, since the first quotation for the meaning "impartial" is dated 1659, one wonders about the direction of "this unscrupulous steal."

If we grant that both *impartial* and *bored* are real and current meanings, we can at least avoid the ridiculousness of a 'tis-tain't controversy between equally well-educated and intelligent persons. We may also see that ambiguity does exist in *a disinterested judge*, just as it exists in *curious university scientists* and a multitude of other phrases. But let's agree that the ambiguity in *a disinterested judge* is undesirable. What shall we do about it? To insist that *disinterested* can or does have only one meaning is to insist on what simply isn't true; to insist that others accept my meaning and reject their own simply because I insist is to invite objection. (I use *disinterested* to mean *impartial* only.) If this word requires more attention than countless other words with multiple, even contradictory meanings (and it doesn't),

one can simply recognize that, when speaking the word, he runs the risk of being misinterpreted and, when hearing the word, of misinterpreting. As a speaker he can avoid the word if he feels the risk too great; as a hearer, he's certainly better off for knowing that ambiguity is possible.

Perhaps one can put *disinterested* back in proper perspective, first, by recognizing that many words have multiple meanings; the ACD, for example, lists 104 meanings for *run*, and Irving Lorge reportedly assigns the word 832 meanings.<sup>4</sup> Somehow we manage to make our way through these meanings so that *run* remains a useful word. And pity the poor punster if he were deprived of multiple meanings. Then, too, *disinterested* is far from being alone in having extremely divergent meanings. "He rents his house," "Gus didn't mind," "The prisoner was in charge of the lieutenant," "He married her," "He wants nothing," "since he was eight" are all, unhappily, ambiguous,<sup>5</sup> although no one seems to have become unduly upset about the condition of the language here. Not always, but usually, context clarifies the ambiguity in these expressions. So too, usually, with *disinterested*:

The administration could find grounds for real concern over the apathy shown by Illinois Republicans . . . The implications of this disinterest . . . But the current Republican boredom in Illinois . . . In this disinterested atmosphere . . .<sup>6</sup>

Possibly it is worth noting that ambiguity may spring not only from the meaning of a given word but from grammatical structure as well. The phrase

<sup>4</sup> Inside the ACD, Feb., 1953, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> This phenomenon is hardly recent or exclusively English if one can judge by the definition of *onwenda* in Clark Hall's Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary and of *olim* in White's Latin Dictionary.

<sup>6</sup> Christian Science Monitor, April 5, 1954, p. 1.

*John's betrayal*, for example, is ambiguous. We can and sometimes do misinterpret a subjective genitive for an objective genitive, or an objective for a subjective; but the remedy hardly lies in insisting that a genitive can have only one meaning. Similarly no one has insisted on strait-jacketing the structure substantive—verb—substantive—substantive, even though this structure is capable of varied meanings, including the ambiguity in Othello's ". . . she wish'd that heaven had made her such a man" (I.iii.162-3). Nor will a strait jacket resolve the delightful ambiguity in an advertisement for Disney's *Alice in Wonderland*: ". . . and an army whose sol-

diers are playing cards." Not the least of the virtues of C. C. Fries' *Structure of English*, it seems to me, lies in the attention given to structural ambiguity. It is in the language; we cannot argue or decree it out of the language. Recognizing its existence, we are better equipped to handle a given ambiguity in either speaking or hearing, writing or reading. So too with the varied meanings of words.

In epilog, I may note the occasional objection that "usage" says little or nothing about the inventive or imaginative use of words. The proper reply, of course, is that "correctness" says less.

## The Freshman Composition Course: A Study in Shame and Glory<sup>1</sup>

EDWARD STONE<sup>2</sup>

To consider how to improve instruction in Freshman Composition on the university level is to own up, primarily, to a situation frequently in need of immediate and drastic action. It is not a new situation: witness the many grappling with it in previous issues of this journal. Nor is any changed climate of opinion likely to result from any single presentation of it. But certainly honesty requires us to admit that at least a wrong has been done and is being done three times every week. Not to admit this is to be guilty of apathy, unawareness, or perhaps downright knavery.

How came this evil about? Composition, in its finest sense, is Rhetoric, and the study of Rhetoric goes back to the

medieval trivium—surely a lineage above reproach. Not only is it the oldest subject that any one has ever taught or is likely to teach: it is the most time-revered and the one most respected even by the nuclear-fission and Russia-conscious age in which we now make our living. Unfortunately for us *and* for society, however, we English professors perform our duties in complete unawareness or obliviousness or neglect of this fact. Although the study of *literature* passed from the country squire and vicar into the college classroom only rather recently in modern history and although it remains there only with the grudging approval of our society, nevertheless it is literature that we all aim to profess; and it is Rhetoric—or Freshman Composition, to use the ugly phrase—that we have come to look upon as the upstart, the somewhat disreputable relation from

<sup>1</sup> A revision of a talk delivered to the Virginia—North Carolina CEA convention in October, 1954.

<sup>2</sup> University of Virginia

across Culture's tracks. What a magnificent reverse of values was this! How triumphant a turning of the tables of respectability! Verily, the tail now doth wag the dog!

Consider, now, this schizophrenic principle in action. Trailing clouds of the glory of the graduate school which he has by now come to think of as his *true* home, the young Ph.D. finds himself not only with the shades of his first prison term falling on him, but its manacles securely locked on his guiltless and unaccustomed wrists. Fuming and fretting like Tennyson's jilted young lover, he finds the doors to all the literature courses (above the sophomore level, i.e.) barred, each ceaselessly guarded against trespass by its balding senile porter insolently clanking the keys of his office (or rustling his offprints). Thus does fury come, then despair—finally cynicism and time-serving. And understandably. For not only is he not permitted to teach an elective—not to mention a graduate—course for which he is qualified: he knows absolutely nothing about the subject of rhetoric, which he will spend the greater part of the next three or thirteen years teaching!

There are some compensations, to be sure. The Powers That Be are not completely unkind. Like Charles Lamb, who to the charge that he had arrived late for work every day of his working life answered that on the other hand he had left early every day too, so our young Poe scholar is assured that although it involves a non-sequitur to ask him to teach two or three sections of Comp, at least he need not feel compelled to take the freshmen seriously. Witness the grader with which he is hastily furnished—that affable familiar ghost who weekly gulls him with intelligence about the progress of his own students. Witness the implicit sanction given to time stolen from teaching duties for research and—lovely word, God wot—*publication*. Wit-

ness, finally, the lack of causal relationship between any proficiency he may eventually acquire in teaching Freshman Comp, and his chances of promotion within the department.

As for the freshmen themselves—the cash customers, or captive audience, or what you will—let *them* look for help to the Lord, whence cometh the only help I can see for them at the moment. Granted that their attitude toward us is *not* a loving one, that perhaps five of every hundred of them will major in our field—still they are the genuine swine, and what artificial pearls they will find thrown to them! If they are lucky, they will find themselves in a section taught by a graduate student, who, while he knows no more about Rhetoric than the Ph.D., at least is more eager to serve and to please and who is at least closer in time than the Ph.D. to *that only actual experience with his subject* that either ever has had—namely, the course that he himself took at the age of seventeen!

In days less evil than these, to be sure, if no good, at least no great harm results from such pedagogical aimlessness: eighty-five hours or so of a freshman's time more or less wasted—ah, but Youth has so many thousands to spare! But the days ARE evil, they are likely to become more evil for us here in this greatest and almost last of the democracies, and it ill behooves us who in such great numbers derive our sustenance from institutions which are all committed to the principle of democracy and its correlative, the enlightened citizen—it ill behooves us, while awaiting our opportunity to tell fifteen upperclassmen yearly about the intricacies of wit in *Finnegan's Wake*, to fritter away the time of fifty or seventy-five freshmen yearly—time that could and should be spent, if not making literature fanciers of them, at least making them literate, clear-thinking Americans.

For is that not, after all, our main function and responsibility, we in the humanities? What heresy was it that consigned Rhetoric to the mere function of preparing a student for the sophomore lit course? Verily, the English sentence is a noble thing—as a great diplomat and master craftsman of Rhetoric has declared; and a unified, coherent, and emphatic composition or speech is the noblest work of man in the humanities. For every composition instructor who refuses to let his students make declarations with no responsibility for pertinent illustration, there will be five, ten, or fifteen intelligent citizens who will not put up with vagueness anywhere they find it, who can distinguish between conviction and cant. For every instructor who permits no fitting together of unrelated ideas, at least a handful of graduates will emerge who will not be taken in by conclusions jumped at in writing or on the platform. And every time an instructor insists on a definition for a dangerous generality, he is serving not only the ancient and now defunct cause of logic: he is shoring up the fast crumbling bulwark of intellectual freedom in this country.

There is a national organization of college students deriving its funds from concealed sources and its members openly committed to a policy of wiring their professors and classmates for subversive sound. Not long ago this organization sought a charter from the Student Council of an institution in our very midst. The request was refused. I for one am grateful to the professors who taught those council members and to all others who shaped their consciousness. I do not know who they are. But I do know the English instructor of one of the charter members of the unchartered group and I do know that his class—a freshman class—was studying the various meanings (definition and connotations) of words during the height of the contro-

versy in question. It was he who told me how this student in effect read himself out of the respect of his classmates by his inability to define the particular kind of subversion that he and his confederates were yearning so to be able to eradicate among their superiors. Now if that class of freshmen should, by the time they graduate, be able to perceive the difference between the Hardy of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and the Hardy of *Tess*, or the progress of Shakespeare from *Romeo* to *Winter's Tale*, all well and good. In fact, fine and dandy. But meanwhile, we must put first things first: we must cultivate our weed-cluttered garden.

How to go about it? Nothing short of an overhauling of the present departmental scale of values, system of rewards and punishments, and of the conception of the composition teacher is in order for most universities. My own recommendations I give you now in the form of this series of proposals, none of which are new, but all of which need repeating:

(1) That every English faculty empowered to award the Ph.D. degree require its candidates to pass a course in the theory and practice of freshman composition; in effect, that it publicly admit that although many are called for research, very few are actually ever chosen;

(2) That the question of who will teach such a course (actually, which SCHOOL, with the Educationists always suspect) be treated seriously, but not so seriously as to result in inaction;

(3) That any applicant for an instructorship be considered primarily from the standpoint of *his desirability as a teacher of the freshman course*, the interviewers honestly admitting that the likelihood of his having to teach any other specialized course is not great;

(4) That no instructor be kept on (much less *promoted*) who has not taught the freshman course *conscientiously* at least (and *well*, if possible), regardless of the number of new kennings he has found in *Beowulf*—it being taken for granted that no man who has done an important job badly or indifferently is entitled to the reward of another job;

(5) That wherever possible a new Ph.D. should be given a course in his specialty. Such a reward would entail this benefit to the section or sections of Composition that he does teach: that they are more likely to be actual Composition sections than the furtively or openly disguised courses in literature that the frustrated Ph.D. frequently tends to make them;

(6) That all Professors thus displaced from elective courses by young Ph.D.s should accept a section of Freshman Composition. *Accept?* Nay, WELCOME!! For will not the freshmen be attracted to these men (who generally are the best teachers), and maybe even be induced by their personality and ability to elect courses in English—who knows, perhaps even major in English? Certainly those of you who teach in undergraduate colleges know how rhetorical this question is.

With my specific recommendations it is probable that many have differed and will want to differ. But how the need for action can much longer remain conscientiously unacknowledged, I confess I do not know.

## The Teaching of Reading in the Freshman Course<sup>1</sup>

E. J. HUTCHINSON,<sup>2</sup> RECORDER

The considerations of the panel, "The Teaching of Reading in the Freshman Course," gained definition and specificity from the reviews of the programs offered by the University of Florida, the University of Minnesota, and Purdue University.

The speakers emphasized the importance of the development of good reading habits by freshmen in order to make academic success possible. Each discuss-

ed the need for a reading program and the tremendous potential that a good program could offer the other language arts. Some of the important purposes which instruction in reading were to serve were: to increase general reading efficiency, to increase reading interest and appreciation, to improve the level of comprehension through critical reading with concerns for logic and semantics, to train to adjust speed to the type of material being read.

Concern was expressed over the relatively minor role reading instruction plays in some freshman composition-communication courses. It was felt that some students have had little, if any, ad-

<sup>1</sup> A panel discussion at the Spring Meeting, 1954, of the CCCC, in St. Louis, Missouri. Participating Chairman: James I. Brown, University of Minnesota; Speakers: Russell Cosper, Purdue University, and J. Hooper Wise, University of Florida; Discussion Leader: Alton Hobgood, Georgia Institute of Technology.

<sup>2</sup> Wisconsin State College, Oshkosh

vanced reading instruction. More complex materials, more involved assignments, and higher general standards of achievement in college were identified as other factors often demanding help in the form of reading instruction in order to bridge the gap between high school and college. Many types of reading problems were pointed out and many cases were identified in which students read at less than one hundred words per minute and with comprehension levels as low as 25 per cent. The speakers felt that some positive program had to be devised to meet these problems.

Three general categories of reading programs were identified: (1) instruction in reading carried on in the conventional classroom as part of a broader course; (2) laboratory instruction in which students work in groups or individually; (3) clinical help provided by experts who would do the individual counselling and therapy needed by the severely handicapped.

There was general agreement that reading instruction was the job of the English department and its properly trained staff. The example of the University of Florida was used to show how a large staff could carry on such a program with the aid of two experts who were engaged to handle extreme cases.

An example of the reading laboratory program (involving an enrollment of 638 students at Purdue University) was outlined. Under this plan classes meet twice a week, demand no outside preparation on the part of students, and carry credit although formerly they did not. Most of the work is done individually, the film being about the only activity involving group participation. Booths are available and books are individually selected. Competition is discouraged. Most of the talk is of reading improvement rather than statistics advancement. Much responsibility falls on the student, for he is expected to correct his own tests and

keep his own records. In this program there is a concern for speed as well as comprehension. Mechanical aids and other specially prepared materials are used.

The place of mechanical devices, grading, and speed were considered by each speaker. Although machines such as the pacer and the tachistoscope were generally used, it was indicated that a program would not be unduly hampered if such were not available. As for grading, the speakers suggested that emphasis be placed on individual improvement rather than comparison with norms. Each pointed out the responsibility of the student for any real change or gain. Two of the three men indicated a continued concern for speed although they were very aware that many people were putting most or all of their emphasis on comprehension.

The success of the laboratory technique was indicated by the following results of the testing of the 638 Purdue students to whom reference has previously been made. When Test I was given, the average speed was 222 words per minute and comprehension was 58 per cent. After instruction, Test II was given. The results showed that the students were now averaging 457 words per minute and comprehension had gone up to 70 per cent. This was an increase of 235 words per minute and a 20 per cent increase in comprehension. Later when the Dean quizzed the seniors as to whether this reading work should be continued: 212 said "yes"; 30 were undecided; and 14 said "no." The idea of getting student evaluation of the practicality of the reading instruction was used at the University of Minnesota also. Here it was desired to find out which techniques of instruction the students believed to be most worthwhile. They listed in the order of helpfulness: Harvard films, pacing, timed reading, tachistoscopic (timed

reading and vocabulary), and pure ta-chistoscopic reading.

Although much of the discussion was centered on what the regular composition-communication faculty could do to improve the quality of reading of freshmen, the part of the expert and the place of clinical techniques were also included. A remedial case for the expert was, by one definition, a student who could not benefit from the regular developmental reading program. More specifically, the remedial group at Purdue was made up of students who ranged from speeds of

58 to 200 words per minute and comprehension levels of 25 to 75. One speaker felt that the lower decile could be called remedial. Two of the speakers hastened to point out that many are "salvaged" by this help and soon returned to the regular groups. The value that students put on this service was very high also. One university reported that between four and five hundred students availed themselves of the opportunity of working with the experts. The students came voluntarily, there was no charge, and a waiting list existed.

## Student Incentive and the Freshman Writing Magazine

HARRIS W. WILSON<sup>1</sup>

The realistic instructor of freshman composition in the American college must come sooner or later to the admission that the greatest obstacle to his effectiveness as a teacher lies in the mental attitudes of his students. Those relatively comfortable problems of content, organization, and correctness are dwarfed by the brutal fact that most of the students in his classes do not have sufficient interest in writing to give him the minimum concentration and effort necessary before instruction can even begin. Consequently, if he is honest, discussions of technique and method that fail to take into account the basic problem of student incentive leave him restive and unconvinced.

But facing an unpleasant fact does not involve throwing the most important part of freshman composition overboard. I submit that respectable writing never has been, is not now, and never will be fun, easy, or a group proj-

ect. It is essentially a lonely, difficult process in which the act of creation is no more important than the shaping that follows. And the effective freshman composition program must do justice to the whole of the activity, not simply concentrate upon one particular phase.

The admission that to write well is to do hard work does not, however, detract in any way from the importance of the original incentive that leads one to write. It is an admission, rather, that for most human beings the incentive must be a strong one in order to motivate the process. But to achieve that incentive through a watering down of the disciplinary aspect of writing seems to me a delusive and harmful practice. The old assumption that the college-level student in composition is already well-motivated must be discarded, but we should take care, it seems to me, in our efforts to restore incentive not to resort to methods which entertain the student, help round his personality, perhaps, but fail to teach

<sup>1</sup> University of Illinois

him anything of the discipline of writing.

I propose in this article to discuss the freshman writing magazine as one sane and practical means of adding vitality and significance to the freshman composition course, my discussion being based upon four years' experience as member of the editorial committee and as editor of the *Green Caldron*, the freshman writing magazine at the University of Illinois. Established in 1931, the *Green Caldron* has enjoyed a continuous existence of nearly a quarter of a century. It long ago passed through the experimental stage and now can be quite realistically considered an institution. Three basic editorial principles have, I think, contributed most to its success.

Of first importance is the editorial policy guiding selection of themes for publication. The keystone of an effective policy is a clear idea of the distinction between the freshman writing magazine and the ordinary undergraduate literary magazine. The main purpose of the freshman magazine used as a supplementary text (and it must be so used to make its way financially) should be the providing of illustrative materials and models for the class exercises currently being done. The primary virtue of the publication is the encouragement and enlightenment it provides the student by placing before him the successful work of his contemporaries fulfilling the same assignments on which he is laboring. This could be accomplished, of course, through oral presentation or mimeographed material, but in no case would the impact be the same, for the simple reason that the written word achieves its highest dignity in print.

An objection might be made that illustrative models for classroom use should be professional productions instead of amateur, the superiority of the former being obvious. The whole point here, of course, is the great chasm that

exists between the quality of freshman writing and that of professional writing. Literary discernment may be a rare talent among our freshmen, but the least of them in that respect are painfully aware of the distance that separates their own writing from that of Mark Twain, G. K. Chesterton, or Agnes Repplier. Consequently, although the use of professional material undoubtedly has its place in illustrating broad principles of writing, such material does not touch that sensitive and extremely vital impulse, the student's own urge toward self-expression.

The providing of student models for current class work is, then, the main purpose of the freshman writing magazine. But there are subsidiary uses that are very nearly as important with regard to motivation. First among these is the provocative. The student stung in the right way to reply is no longer the apathetic drudge filling out paper to answer assignments. Used to protect an idea or a cherished concept, writing becomes to the student what it should be—a living, vital instrument for defense or attack. Here it is better to resort to a concrete example, a portion of a theme printed in the *Caldron* that is provocative indeed.

#### CHICAGO

CHARLES SISK

Chicago is a swollen, turbulent, distended mass of polyglot human beings, each a virulent entity in the city's consummate infectiousness. It is a tumid cell of life that extends from the border of Wisconsin to the border of Indiana. It defecates its rotteness into an area of blue purity and vies with that purity for dominance.

It is the garbage heap of the Midwest; the scab of humanity coagulates within its core. It spreads its inflammation by arterial railroads . . .

Down Clark Street one sees in succession a tavern, a bookie joint, a burlesque theatre, and, at the corner, an addict selling dope.

The atmosphere of this street has the intermingled smell of a wound being swabbed with alcohol.

On the congested Clark streetcars foulodored breaths contaminate one another.

The Loop is the center of the canker. Impulses of political intrigue and business corruption ooze from this nerve and fester the industrial organism of the Great Plains.

The masses of life convulse over the sidewalks, through traffic lanes and up and down subway tunnels. They are infestation. They are Chicago.

Once in a great while you see a church spire rise up out of this fermentation like a sterilized needle.

As Kipling once remarked of Calcutta: "Having seen it I urgently desire never to see it again. It is inhabited by savages. Its air is dirt."

This theme, written in response to an assignment on metaphor, obviously represents an extreme point of view. And although a few of the figures are striking and effective, many of them fail to come off, are mechanical and contrived. By all standards of rounded development and conventional paragraph construction, the theme must be rated a failure. But it does have one great virtue, that of drive and force. There is no middle ground of reaction. One either agrees or disagrees, in either case violently.

The strong impact of the theme was confirmed by student response. A large percentage of the students at the University of Illinois are from Chicago. These students arose almost to a man in defense of their city. Instructors were pressed to permit answers to what native Chicagoans considered a scurrilous attack, and the *Caldron* committee in turn was subjected to a voluminous influx of retorts. One answer was published in the following issue, but the almost unanimous opinion was that the defending theme was inadequate, erring as much in indiscriminate praise as the first theme had erred in indiscriminate blame. Contributions on the issue continued, and in the next *Caldron* appeared an

answer that pacified all but the most inveterate Chicagophiles.

There is the legitimate question as to whether in this particular case the reaction was not too volatile, the diversion too great from the ideally calm and reasonable approach to controversial matters that should prevail in the college classroom. The editor would be the first to admit his possible culpability on that charge. But a further principle of the effective freshman writing magazine is illustrated by this controversy, and the illustration of that principle is the main reason for the presentation of the Chicago theme here instead of a less inflammatory example of provocative writing. A magazine that is designed expressly for student motivation and yet presents consistently the safe and the usual, defeats its own purpose. The editors must be given and must exercise the prerogative of complete freedom of selection and publication, within, of course, the bounds of good taste and university welfare. The continued effectiveness of the freshman writing magazine at the University of Illinois is due in no small degree to the freedom and support given to the *Caldron* editors by the director of Freshman Rhetoric.

But regardless of one's opinion as to the pedagogical soundness of using such an extreme and biased theme as "Chicago" for student motivation, the fact remains that during the controversy, Freshman Rhetoric at Illinois ceased to be a routine requirement and became a vital, significant court of opinion. In this sense, the whole episode must be considered of absolute value.

In addition to its provocative value, the freshman writing magazine has an important function as a permanent and attractive showcase for the outstanding themes produced in the freshman writing course. It is in this aspect, too, that the magazine most particularly fulfills

the function vital to almost any periodical—that of entertainment. The freshman theme can constitute in talented hands almost an art form in itself and exert its own special appeal. The tenacity of the "theme" in the freshman composition course is quite probably due to its peculiar adaptability to the adolescent's literary impulse, an impulse for the most part short-lived, incapable of sustained, logical composition, but achieving on occasion extremely vivid and powerful effects within a short compass. Any composition instructor can recall such efforts which deserve the relative immortality afforded by the printed periodical.

The most important function, then, of the freshman writing magazine in increasing student incentive is to provide illustrative, familiar models for current classroom work. But supplementing this primary function is the use of the magazine to provoke student reaction in controversial matters close to the student's own experience, and to place before the student in permanent and attractive form the outstanding writing being done by his contemporaries. There are many other ways, of course, in which the freshman writing magazine can serve to the advantage of the composition staff, the English department, and the institution as a whole. For example, the magazine makes themes readily available for distribution to high schools as illustrations of work being done in college composition classes, an important function in view of the fact that freshman composition is becoming increasingly the principal *bête noire* in the college curriculum for many of our high school graduates. And at the University of Illinois, the *Green Caldron* has formed the basis for a periodic series of weekly programs on the university radio station. But the main justification of the magazine must lie in the part it can play in transforming fresh-

man composition from at worst a hodge-podge of irrelevant nonsense, at best a pragmatic "service course" (that dismal term!), to a subject quite capable of bearing independent significance and interest.

I would not intimate, however, that the freshman writing magazine does not have its troubles. Because of its relatively specialized function, the composition staff must be educated to an extent in the proper use of the magazine. Many staff members persist, to the editor's irritation, in judging the magazine by professional and purely literary standards. Others object to it on the grounds of additional and extraneous paraphernalia added to a course already too cluttered with gadgets of one kind or another, an objection which is right enough in principle but which fails to take into account the integral effectiveness of the magazine if used properly. And the incipient magazine especially must in many cases overcome the inertia of an English department that looks upon the freshman course as a rather distasteful but necessary compost for the nurture of the exotic blooms of literature. But all these obstacles can be overcome by tactful and good-humored persistence.

Whatever the difficulties, the freshman writing magazine, well-established and intelligently used, can contribute materially to the effectiveness of the freshman composition course. As I have indicated, a magazine is only one step toward the solution of, to paraphrase Carlyle, the "condition of composition" question. But any means we can use to add to the significance and vitality of the composition course deserve, in these critical times, our most careful consideration. If we can overcome the basic obstacle of student incentive, our larger problems will quite probably take care of themselves.

## Morale in Remedial English

LAWRENCE J. HYNES<sup>1</sup>

Ideally, the Remedial English class is filled with students who are overjoyed because an understanding administration has selected them to receive special training so that their experience with English composition will be pleasant and successful. Actually, the Remedial English class is filled—there is no doubt about that point—but many a student feels that he is being punished, that an unreasonable advisor has insulted him by suggesting that he can profit from the course, and that he will henceforth be known for the rest of his life in both his hometown and his university as a stupid oaf who had to take "Idiot English."

To make the course palatable, instructors have resorted to subterfuges: one university requires *all* of its freshmen to study the vocabulary and grammar of the European languages so that a small section of the student enrollment can, by some mysterious analogy, learn to master a language which they have spoken all of their lives; another—and this is a popular solution—renames the course, believing that anything called a rose will smell as sweet.

Miami University, Oxford, also has the remedial student. Well, who is he? What is he like? He has taken the college entrance examination in language skills and has ended by being enrolled in one of five remedial sections because he falls into the second percentile or lower in mechanics. He probably has not done well on other sections of the examination. He has less than a fifty-fifty chance of beginning his sophomore year. He has about one chance in five of completing college. By the time he enters his English class, he has usually been warned either by the Admissions

Office or by his advisor about his chances of success. About one out of twenty disappears from college between registration and the first day of class. He is not very happy: his roommate may gloat, he may be afraid to write his parents about his entrance scores, and when he enters his Remedial English classroom, he is surrounded by twenty-five to thirty equally disheartened students. In short, the Remedial English student at Miami University is no happier on that first day of class than his counterpart on other campuses.

It is this situation that challenges the instructor. The *easiest* thing to do is to discourage the student even more, on the grounds that there is little chance of success. But the point is that the student is not a statistic: he is one individual, and as that one individual, he may learn enough to do not only satisfactory work, but excellent work. The *next easiest* thing to do is to encourage him, to tell him that tests are fallible, and that he will undoubtedly master the language within thirty days. The *best* possible thing to do is to urge the student to make an honest evaluation of *all* his abilities—not just his language skills—and to ask himself why he really came to college.

How does this approach work in the classroom? Let's look at the students at the first class meeting. They have few opinions about the instructor, but the experiences that they have had with the English language and English teachers have not been happy ones. They may have been so poor in language skills that they were ignored; but more likely they were drilled and drilled and drilled until they had half-memorized the textbook definitions of nouns, objects, appositives, and all the rest: the result is either weary

<sup>1</sup> Miami University, Oxford, Ohio

surrender to or an intense hatred of anything called English. Somehow, the instructor must make the students feel that he is on their side; that he wants as many people as possible to learn as much as possible; that he teaches the course because he wants to, not because he is forced to. My own method is to tell these students on this first day of class why they are there: that they have been selected on the basis of an entrance examination, but that there are important reasons why they did not do well enough. Most of the students are willing to charge their previous teachers in high school and grade school with incompetence. Regardless of whether or not I think the charge true, I either discourage the attitude or de-emphasize it. The most important reason is that they may not have taken their grade school and high school work in English seriously, even though they were capable of learning. Perhaps they spent most of their time on subjects which at the time seemed more practical—physics, mathematics, art, or other subjects in which language competes with other methods of communication. There are usually more men than women in such classes: as boys, they just never felt like pleasing the teacher with an assignment well done, because boys aren't like that. Now, as men, they are more concerned with acquiring an education, because they are faced with making a living at the end of four more years. There is more news to cheer the students. The majority, because they have been weak in language skills, have already been subjected to many hours of diagramming and parsing—fortunately, Miami University emphasizes actual theme writing. The prospect of writing instead of diagramming will brighten many faces. Many of the Remedial students protest that they have nothing to write about: they expect to be assigned essays like Lamb's or Ruskin's. To hear that they are to handle writing

problems that grow out of the rest of their college work—laboratory reports, essay-type examinations—comes as a relief.

I usually spend some time during this first meeting in defining *communication* and *mistake*. These students want something to write home to their parents to erase the "stigma" of being in a Remedial section: I encourage them to do so. In my own mind, the most important point to make about a student's work is the amount that is acceptable. In a single paper written in class, the student has two sentence fragments, eight misspellings, and four comma splices—and there are weaknesses in composition. At the same time, the student has sixteen complete sentences, two hundred fifty correctly spelled words, and some general organization to the paper. This student generally knows what a sentence is; otherwise, he could not have written sixteen complete sentences. He has written four fragments because he does not know that these constructions are not acceptable in college writing (many of these constructions fit patterns). If he understands the concept of the sentence, he can learn to use semicolons; and when dictated the same eight words, the student spells one correctly (he finds it difficult to remember whether the word ends in *ent* or *ant*), spells six exactly as he did before, and invents one new spelling. Obviously there is some consistency: the student's problem is not his not being able to spell, but his learning the wrong spellings. If he can learn the wrong spellings, he can certainly learn the right spellings.

I hold to this approach as long as possible. Several weeks before the end of the semester, some of the students are going to conclude, quite sensibly, that they either can never pass the course or cannot learn enough to pass in one semester. Miami University is a state school. As the sons and daughters of taxpayers,

some students feel that taxation without graduation is tyranny; that because without a degree they will be excluded from some careers, the university is undemocratic. Others will decide that their lives have been permanently blighted by an unsympathetic teacher. Some who believe that he who keeps trying always wins, will try again. I believe that the teacher has an obligation to those who cannot pass, as well as to those who can.

Last year, a former faculty member remarked that he was especially pleased by the success of businessmen whom he had dissuaded from entering medical school. I do not believe in forcing square pegs into round holes. A student ought not to be encouraged to make repeated fruitless efforts at doing what aptitude and intelligence prevent him from doing. In later years, the student who leaves school because he cannot pass college standards will, I hope, think pleasantly about education, the university faculty, and the Alumni Loyalty Fund.

I mentioned earlier in this paper that I believe that the best approach is to ask a student to evaluate his abilities. In the first week, each student writes a theme about his reasons for going to college—not just a particular college, but college. Later in the semester, each student writes a theme about his future vocation and his qualifications for that vocation. But a student who decides at this point that he really prefers to be a machinist or a truck-driver and simply leaves college is all too rare. What makes such a decision difficult is faculty snobishness. What some faculty members do, in their zeal for education, is to indicate to the student that because he has manual skills instead of verbal skills he is a second-class citizen, that he must immediately acquire the verbal skills that everyone else has taken eighteen years to acquire or realize that he is a "failure," "not good enough for college."

If a student is unlikely to graduate

from college because he cannot write college-level prose, he obviously ought to be directed into other channels. To urge such a student to compete on an impossible level is an unkindness. What has to be done is to show the student that the job he wants college to prepare him for (he is frequently vague about his goals) requires verbal skills; that because he does not enjoy working with words, he will undoubtedly not enjoy such a job; that he can find what he wants in life—income, satisfaction, security—in some other job that does not require a college education; and that his training in college will require his continual use of words. But the student will still not be satisfied: he wants the prestige of a college education. If there is any pressure on the student from his family, there is no good answer: parents are more difficult to convince than students.

In brief, my whole plan for the Remedial Program (or for any student in a regular section who really belongs in Remedial English) consists of two approaches: first, overcoming the student's resistance to studying English and, second, overcoming his intention to remain in the university until he is told to leave. The student who does not do well has either been told repeatedly that he is an incompetent or been lulled into thinking that college standards will be no higher than high school standards. At any rate, the effect of being put into a Remedial English class is the same: he resents what has happened to him; he is discouraged, but not discouraged enough to quit. The sympathetic instructor has to answer the student's objections one by one: a command of the language is essential to success in college and in the positions for which college trains the student; composition is not the brain child of mean-minded ogres intent on making college an obstacle course. When the student finally realizes that the fault

is in himself, that he cannot, no matter how many hours he studies, succeed in passing the course within a reasonable number of semesters, then the instructor has to overcome another kind of objection: the student's reluctance to admit that he is a "failure." To the sympathetic instructor, the hard-working student who cannot overcome the handicaps of intelligence and training is not a failure! The instructor knows that every man has his limitations, even himself, and that the successful human being is the man who has learned to work within those limitations. Too often, the student

who struggles in college and is at last sent home robbed of his dignity represents the failure of an instructor who feels that his own way of life is the only way of life and that people who do not accept his values are useless and annoying.

The problem of morale pertains to the student's success, whether he remains in school or whether he seeks another path which, for him, will lead to a happy and productive life. It is a matter of making him receptive to learning or preparing him to believe that his talents lie in other profitable directions.

## Credit for the Sub-Freshman English Composition Course

REV. FERDINAND J. WARD, C.M.<sup>1</sup>

At the "Sub-Freshman English Workshop" of the College Composition and Communication Conference in Chicago, 1953, three-fourths of the forty-seven representatives stated that their colleges did not give any credit for a sub-college-level English course. In a similar workshop held in St. Louis, 1954, only five of the twenty-five colleges present refused credit to this type of work. This wide difference in the two meetings may indicate a new attitude towards giving credit for the sub-freshman composition course, which is often termed English 0.

When a student is placed in a remedial composition course, he often develops a feeling of inferiority. That he should not, because a course in the essentials of writing is beneficial, is true, yet his presence in English 0 will produce a consciousness of inequality. The statement heard on the campus about such a student is, "Oh, he is one of those

dumb-bells in sub-freshman English." If his course bore some credit hours, and if its title bore a more pleasing name, he would feel that he was as normal a freshman as the others in regular composition courses.

If a senior high school student has not been drilled in formal grammar and in clear written expression, he will probably receive a low score in his college placement test. Since he does not qualify for a regular freshman composition course, he is placed in English 0. The student, however, with no preliminary training in French, Spanish, Latin, and even mathematics, may enter beginning courses in these subjects, and be given credit for acceptable work. Why then should a poorly trained English student, who fails his placement test, be assigned to a term of remedial English that bears no credit? He is the same as the student entering a credit-bearing beginner's course in Spanish or Latin.

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Were an alumnus of thirty years' standing to glance through his college's catalogue, he would note a course like "Remedial English bearing no credit"; he might find other like courses. His reaction might be that his college was returning to the day when preparatory departments were part of a university. Despite the good effects an English course has on students, it adds nothing to the high standard of a university. Since such a course will be part of the freshman year, it ought to be clothed with college credit.

Among the students in an English 0 course, resentment over the payment of a fee for a course not giving credit is ever present. If the student pays the same amount for this course, as he does for his normal freshman courses, his feeling of bitterness grows as his term ends. Maybe the wars, or maybe the times, have made the students insistent upon rewards for what they pay for. If a freshman objects to the fee for this course, he may go elsewhere, for that is his only alternative.

Does this feeling of resentment result in any disciplinary problem? The majority of sub-freshmen come from the lower third of their senior high school year; they not only will write incorrectly but they will speak in the same manner; they lack some of the essential qualities of college students and in the majority of cases have no humility. How often does one hear, "Why should I talk that way? No one speaks like that", and "Why should I study? I can pass the final test anyway." An instructor in a normal freshman class is rarely pestered with a lack of class order, but in the sub-freshman class the teacher's patience is often sorely strained. Were credit given for this course, the whole attitude of the student would change, because he no longer feels that he was punished for his poor English background.

No one has ever questioned the value of a sub-freshman composition course, for it not only improves its students, but it keeps many in college who otherwise might have left. Would not more remain in college if credit were given for this remedial course? Now twenty percent of the entering sub-freshmen finish four years of work. A higher percentage might persevere, were credit given for this work, because it would encourage a deeper interest in their studies. Privately supported colleges need more revenue than they ever did in the past; they can add more by keeping up their enrollment without sacrificing their standards.

Whenever a college considers credit for English 0, it is immediately aware of the reactions of its neighboring institutions. Do they likewise give credit? Will they condemn it for what they think is a lowering of standards?

In a study of 57 Middle-Western colleges of various sizes, it was found that 35 of them have sub-freshman English courses, and that 22 of them gave some kind of credit. Some colleges gave three credit hours for five hours of work; others gave three hours of credit for three hours of work, and then a few gave two hours for a like number of work hours. Several offered one hour of study for which one credit hour was given. The University of Detroit gives three credit hours for four hours of work, calling its course, "Tutorial English." In giving two credit hours for two hours of work, Butler University does not allow the credit to be applied for a major in English.

Colleges will always have need for a remedial course in English composition, because many entering freshmen will be deficient in grammar, sentence structure, and spelling. To make English 0 a credit-bearing course will be a forward step in developing better students.

## NSSC News

JEAN MALMSTROM<sup>1</sup>

At the annual business meeting in Chicago last December, the National Society for the Study of Communication passed a motion to offer associate memberships in the organization to members of CCCC for \$2.50 per year.

At the same meeting Burton H. Byers was elected president for 1955. Mr. Byers is Educational Specialist in the Academic Evaluation Department, The Provost Marshal General's School, Camp Gordon, Georgia. Other new officers elected were: Kenneth Harwood, Chairman, Department of Telecommunications, University of Southern California, first vice-president; Thorrel Fest, Associate Professor of Speech, University of Colorado, and Harold Zelko, Professor of Public Speaking, Pennsylvania State University, members-at-large on the Executive Committee.

The NSSC 1955 summer conference will be held at Michigan State College under the sponsorship of the Central Michigan Society for the Study of Communication. This local chapter is one of six. The others are located in Denver, Honolulu, Portland (Oregon), Seattle, and Maui in the Hawaiian Islands. Elwood Murray reports in the *NSSC Newsletter* that the activities of these chapters have been varied. "The most noteworthy aspect of the Michigan program was in its contacting of community and industrial leaders when special lectures were promoted; in Denver the chief concern was in hostessing the Summer Conference at Estes Park, and presenting a variety of panels and special programs in

different aspects of communication; in Portland outstanding work was done in promoting special seminars for other local and state groups; in Honolulu study of sociodrama and work with the Pacific Speech Association was [sic!] gotten under way." Apparently Mr. Murray has had no communication on communication in Maui.

The Committee on Film Production has begun work on a listing and evaluation of films which may be useful in communication work. Each member has been assigned specific responsibilities. Martin Anderson is listing films produced by colleges and universities; Seth Fessenden, Russell Jenkins, and Ralph Nichols are surveying those produced by educational film companies; Harold Zelko is compiling a list of such films produced by industry. John Keltner and Richard Woellhaf are in charge of developing an evaluation scale. The list will undoubtedly be invaluable if and when our modern architects find effective ways to darken our new glass-walled classrooms.

At last December's business meeting unanimous approval was given to a motion that NSSC express to the Executive Council of the Speech Association of America its desire to be the sponsoring agent for the interest group in communication which may be formed under the new SAA constitution.

Part of Chairman Wilhelmina Hill's report of the Committee on Communication in Government in the Spring, 1955, *Journal of Communication*, is extremely

<sup>1</sup> Western Michigan College

thought-provoking. It offers the kind of spur to speculation which many CCCC members looked for and did not find at their spring meeting this year.

Miss Hill, who is associated with the Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D.C., describes a seminar on communication problems held there last summer. Two members of NSSC organized and conducted the meeting. Present were persons concerned with staff development and administration in the Social Security Administration, Public Health, the Secretary's Office, and the Office of Education.

The seminar members expressed keenest interest in materials dealing with listening. Miss Hill remarks, "This particular skill is greatly needed by people who work in conference so frequently." (Editorial suggestion for speculation on the earnest layman's search for expert advice on listening: Are today's "listening experts" "good listeners"? If not, why not?)

Pressing problems in the international field concern not only language as such, but also broader inter-personal relationships involved in U. S. technical assistance programs abroad. (Editorial suggestion for speculation by teachers of young people due soon for military service, probably in foreign countries: What about this field called, as we choose, metalinguistics, exolinguistics, superlinguistics, linguistic geography, glosso-dynamics, etc.?)

Another group of problems concerns communication skills as related to staff development and in connection with field work. Miss Hill says, "Those who are dealing with Civil Defense are anxious to carry on their work without creating too much fear." (Editorial suggestion for speculation by CCCC members: What can we learn and teach about fear and its atomic semantics? What do we know about helping fear to be prudence and not hysteria? Or in another crisis will we have nothing better to offer than Roosevelt's words: "We have nothing to fear but fear itself.")

## CCCC Bulletin Board

Announcing: CCCC Spring Meeting, 1956, at the Hotel Statler, New York City, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, March 22, 23, 24. Program Chairman (and present Assistant Chairman of CCCC) is Francis Shoemaker, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York 27, N. Y. He will welcome suggestions on matters pertaining to the program, and especially on the following questions, which as a "CCCC Guide for Program Planning" were asked at the Chicago, 1955, meeting:

1. Which workshop have you attended?
2. Should this workshop be continu-

ed in 1956? Yes .... No .... If yes, potential leaders are:

3. What subjects or areas would you suggest for new workshops?
4. What topics and speakers would you suggest for Panel Discussions?
5. What topics and speakers would you suggest for General Sessions?
6. Regarding change of program pattern, (a) Would you like to continue with four sessions for each workshop? Yes .... No .... (b) Would you prefer two meetings of each of two workshops? Yes .... No ....
7. What criticisms or recommendations would you like to make?

If you missed the 1955 meeting, but attended the meetings of previous years, please send in your answers based on your experiences at those meetings.

It is with deep regret that we record the sudden death, on June 27, 1954, of Dr. T. F. Mayo, who was Professor of English at the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, and one of the prime movers in the organization of the Committee on the Integration of English Teaching in the High Schools and Colleges of Texas. His lively, informative, and readable article on the organization and work of this Committee appeared in the February, 1955, issue of *CCC*. Dr. Mayo was sixty-one years old.

Published in the *University of Kansas Bulletin of Education* is the "Report on the Second Annual 'Conference on Composition and Literature in High School and College,'" in thirteen pages, with summaries of the six workshops: Reading and Grading Student Compositions; Maintaining Standards of Good English Outside the English Courses; Grammar: What Kind, and How Much?; What Literature Should Be Read in High School?; Convincing Students of the Value of Literature; and Preparing Students for College English.

Also included in this issue of the Kansas *Bulletin of Education* is an account of "The Sixth Annual Principal-Freshman Conference at the University of Kansas," in ten pages, describing a movement which is becoming increasingly popular in promoting greater co-operation between college and high school.

Any CCCC member interested in both these reports can obtain a free copy of the *Bulletin of Education*, as long as the supply lasts, from Oscar M. Haugh, 120

Fraser Hall, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. Any CCCC member who wants only the account of the Composition and Literature Conference should write for a reprint to Albert R. Kitzhaber, 203 Fraser Hall, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

*Freshman Writing*, planned as an annual collection of representative freshman themes at Western Reserve University, was published at the close of the first semester of 1954-1955. It has twenty-five double-column pages, 8½ by 11 inches in size, produced by the offset method. Its purpose is to give wider circulation to a few of the better and more representative types-of-assignment compositions turned in during the first semester, and to indicate to second-semester Freshman English students how their classmates in other sections handled the materials of the course. The faculty editors describe the contents of the magazine as follows: "We divided the material into two groups. One group includes five themes, some fairly long, which 'grew out' of reading assignments and thus represent essays in literary criticism. The other group [fifteen in number] includes a larger number of themes on subjects which are more or less standard throughout the Department—e.g., descriptions of towns or people, discussions of motives or ideas—with the hope that these too would be interesting and helpful since they came from assignments to which the reader may already have given some thought."

*Freshman Writing*, Vol. I, No. 1, was published by Marquette University in December, 1954: thirty printed pages (5½ by 8 inches), two additional blank pages for notes, stiff paper cover, twenty-nine themes, a faculty editorial com-

mittee of six (i.e., Freshman Magazine Committee). Initially financed by a special budget, the magazine (one issue each semester to be published) will be a required text in Freshman English, and will be sold for fifty cents a copy. From the "Foreword" to the magazine: "The primary purpose of the magazine is to provide for the freshmen of 1954-1955 a supplementary text containing good student writing. Most students feel that only 'professional' writers write well. Part of the purpose of this magazine is to destroy that misconception. Most students represented herein did not come to college to become professional writers; all of them wrote these essays as routine

assignments for their composition course. Yet the result is superior, though by no means perfect, writing. These essays illustrate that the gap between the 'amateur' and the 'professional' is smaller than most students assume. Our hope, therefore, is that this magazine will develop the student's confidence in his own ability to write. It should, as well, increase his faculty to analyze and evaluate the common forms of prose writing which he is studying in class. Perhaps the publication of these essays may help him to regard his regular assignments less as exercises and more as opportunities to communicate his ideas to a rather large and critical audience."

## Some of the Year's Work in College Composition and Communication

Edgar Dale, "The Problem of Readability," *The News Letter* bringing information to the teacher about the radio, the press, and the motion picture, February, 1954. Reading as communication, as a means of putting us in touch with one another, is serving us well today—but not nearly well enough. One way to improve the quality and amount of reading done by children, young people, and adults is to improve the clarity, the readability, and the grading of reading materials. Statistical formulas for readability, that is, predicting how hard the material is to read (i.e., for what levels, fourth-grader, high-school graduate, college graduate) have been developed. There are cautions in connection with their use, but, wisely used, these readability formulas can do certain things. In their use, (1) visualize the readers; (2) keep in mind the formula that concrete, informal, personal-example material is eighth-grade level or below; abstract, generalized, impersonal is above this

level; (3) attach the material to some problem the person has or some things he might do; (4) test for the level of the reader; (5) make difficult words clear by inference from the context; (6) have friends and specialists read and criticize the materials; (7) pre-test the material for difficulty.

The Fifty-Third Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II, is titled *Mass Media and Education*. Prepared by a committee of the NSSE under the chairmanship of Edgar Dale, the volume considers the purposes of the mass media, how they work, and what the public and the schools can do about them. A list of the chapter titles and their authors includes: "The Role of Mass Communication in American Society," Fred S. Siebert; "The Social Functions of the Press," Theodore Peterson; "Motion Pictures in Relation to Social Controls," Robert W.

Wagner; "Freedom of Access to Broadcasting," I. Keith Tyler; "Procedures and Effects of Mass Communication," Wilbur Schramm; "Procedures and Effects of the Printed Media," Charles E. Swanson; "Social Impact of the Mass Media of Communication," Franklin Fearing; "The Content and Effects of Broadcasting," Dallas W. Smythe; "The Classroom and the Newspaper," Per G. Stensland; "Teaching Discrimination in Motion Pictures," Edgar Dale; and "The Citizen and the Mass Media," R. J. Blakely. Order from The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 37, Ill. Price, \$4.00 in cloth binding, \$3.25 in paper.—Quoted from *The News Letter* bringing information to the teacher about the radio, the press, and the motion picture, February, 1954.

"Communication," for two semesters, integrating reading, writing, speaking, listening, and observing, through a study of the nature of language, the structure of English, and the meaning of words in context; short themes, the documented paper, and the critical evaluation are all written. In these various courses, reading is done for comprehension and for determining the meaning, significance, and value of an article. Vocabulary study is encouraged. Orientation tests are given entering freshmen in reading and in the mechanics and effectiveness of expression. **Low scores cause the student to register for a course in reading at the Reading Clinic or a course in writing in the Writing Laboratory for writing short papers and for oral and written drills in mechanics.**

"Freshman English at the University of Miami," by William S. Wight, in *The Florida Newsletter*, March, 1954. Aims: "to provide the means for an intelligent observation of English usage, to create the will to understand language, and to arouse the desire to become proficient in effective expression." There are two basic courses: "Written and Oral Composition" reviews the conventions of usage—grammatical usage, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence structure—and offers practice in the skills and arts of writing, speaking, and reading; it includes a documented paper with footnotes and a bibliography. In "Composition and Semantics," providing a scientific approach to the English language, especially to the meaning of its words in context and the structure of its sentences, a student reads articles, writes themes, and participates in class discussion on such pertinent topics as learning a language, the scientific method, the visual arts, and the mass media of communication; his writing includes a critical evaluation. Two hundred students take an alternate course,

"English as a Foreign Language" is discussed by the Improvement Services Staff in *The Basic College Newsletter* (Michigan State College) for March, 1954. The work is "primarily concerned with the communication problems of foreign students whose English is inadequate for effective college study," i.e., those foreign students who will not live here permanently and displaced persons and others of permanent residence status. Instruction is adjusted to individual abilities and needs. Students deficient in English language use (discovered by means of an objective test, a writing assignment, and an interview) must enroll for EFL, each two-hour session of which provides opportunities to practice the four communication skills: a reading assignment, a short paper based on the reading, a short talk on the same topic, and a discussion with the instructor on idioms and other puzzling expressions. Dictionaries and mimeographed word-lists are used as vocabulary-development aids; reading materials, such as various

newspapers, news weeklies, and a few especially pertinent books are also used, partly for their orientation value.

William Schwab (Michigan State College), "Is Freshman English Obsolete?" in *The Journal of Higher Education*, February, 1954. Yes, if the instruction continues in the traditional way: reviewing and giving tests in grammar; studying punctuation, paragraphing, and the parts of speech; proclaiming the efficacy of rules of correct usage, or, perhaps, taking an indulgent view towards it; working on sentences—out of context—in exercises or exercise books; misunderstanding what a sentence is; using for readings an anthology which deals with virtually everything; using for writing assignments subjects that students are ill trained to write on. No, if freshman composition is treated as a problem of method rather than of objective—the "how" of teaching our students to write and speak effectively. We must reorient our attitude toward language as a tool of speech and writing, i.e., availing ourselves of the recent work done in linguistics and discarding eighteenth-century explanations of language problems. We must no longer teach a grammar that merely ascribes labels to constructions whose meaning is already known. We must have and must teach our students to have a better understanding of how language changes (diversity and richness of our language; its present patterns, rhythms, structure; historical and current usage; stress and intonation as important signaling devices for meaning); we must cease prescribing "rules" of correct usage, which means telling our students what they should write rather than what the majority of educated people actually do write. We must offer our students for their reading the material that we are competent to teach, i.e., language and literature, in-

stead of the parcels so neatly combined into anthologies. Let us be concerned, not about workbook exercises or drills in "correct usage," but with writing handled on a personal basis with each student—at least four twenty-minute conferences a semester, even though these mean cancelling a class period occasionally—and the analysis of student themes in class. The test of success in solving the problem of obsolete Freshman English versus non-obsolete Freshman English will come when students ask "What is the accepted usage here?" rather than "What is the rule about this?"

Frank Nelson, Long Beach State College, "Stop Teaching Freshman Composition!" in *The CEA Critic*, March, 1954. Since there are no remedies for teaching remedial English and since most of our Freshman Composition is frankly remedial, let's stop teaching Freshman Composition entirely and offer instead a balanced diet of literature, since no one can write who never reads. As for "gross errors" in spelling and punctuation, let's forget about them: they have nothing to do with literature. No one in Norway spells consistently and Norwegians ignore many of the pretty points of punctuation; yet the Norwegians write more and better literature than the Americans and win Nobel prizes. Standard English should not be the written English of the upper classes, but that of the middle classes, or, if necessary, even the vulgate, but of course it must be the true vulgate, which "is closer to the main stream of our language than the mincing jargon of the learned." Insisting on teaching an artificial language by rule, we make any communication secondary. Left to themselves (i.e., without Freshman Composition), students will revert to the vulgate and be able to communicate effectively. Taught literature, i.e., the live master-

pieces of any age (Gibbon, Macaulay, Toynbee, Adam Smith, Veblen, Darwin, Bacon, Arnold, Huxley, Newman, Chaucer, Defoe, Hemingway, Byron, T. S. Eliot), a student will communicate effectively. "Once he really tastes good writing and learns what it is, he will write it under his own power." But such reading must be "fun"; if it ever seems to be work, literature will become as distasteful and ineffective as Freshman Composition.

James I. Brown, "How Teachable Is Listening?" in *Educational Research Bulletin*, April, 1954. "Report of an experimental study in listening and reading abilities carried out in freshman communications courses at the University of Minnesota. The study sought to determine primarily the degree to which listening could be improved by special instruction. Statistically significant improvement was found. Questions regarding the relation of listening and reading were raised by the experimenter. A strong plea is made for additional research in listening and its relation to other communication skills." (Quoted from *The Speech Teacher*, November, 1954.)

Donald J. Lloyd, Wayne University, "The Implications of Linguistics for the Teaching of English," *The CEA Critic*, March, 1954. (Abstract). We can all agree that what we want to do with each student is bring him to as large a competence in his command of English writing as his gifts will permit . . . What the linguists do give us is a picture such as the world has never known of the substance we work with, and for the English teacher that substance is the language of this great and varied people . . . More than a science of language, lin-

guistics offers the English teacher a philosophy of language . . . It is remarkable how little of the detail of linguistics he can get along with, if he grasps its principles and begins to work in terms of them . . . If we can get the idea that language is speech in the mouths of men, and that every other kind of human communication except possibly gesture is a secondary handling activity related to speech, we will see that the English teacher must have a clean-cut understanding of the nature of English speech to deal adequately with writing . . . Our traditional system of writing, with its capitals, its grouping of letters into words, and its conventional punctuation, is an adequate secondary symbolism; we get into trouble only when we think of it as primary and think that when we deal with writing we are dealing with language. . . . It is not phonetics, then, that we need to learn as English teachers, but phonemics: and we need to learn it because we cannot have a grammar without it . . . We need phonemics because phonemes combine into morphemes. Morphemes work in two ways—in word-building and in sentence-building, in vocabulary and in syntax . . . We need to know the list of English phonemes because they make up a system of working together. But it is a short list: nine simple vowels, three semivowels, twenty-one consonants, four degrees of stress, four degrees of pitch, and four kinds of juncture. We don't need a list of the morphemes; all we need to know is the kind of morphemes that occur. We don't need a complete syntax; all we need to know is the representative patterns of representative units. If we have this equipment (that we can pick up in one semester) we know our language for the purpose of teaching it. Then we can teach our students how to use their eyes to reconstruct the patterns that are native to their ears, and how to build into writing the patterns that they speak . . .

Present knowledge about language has two other kinds of implication for us, at least. One lies in the relationship of language to the individual who possesses it as a learned pattern of habits and uses it, and the other in the relationship of language to the society which cannot express itself without it. The first is the matter of language-learning, deciding that the usage of one group in the community is reprehensible and the usage of another to be imitated. Our job is a professional one, to teach the tools of observation, so that our students, moving from the uneducated into the educated group, can observe, evaluate, and determine for themselves what new practices they want to observe.

The June, 1954, *Speech Monographs* contains "A Bibliography of Rhetoric and **Public Address for the Year 1953**"—twenty-nine double-column pages of titles. The arrangement and classifications are as follows:

Ancient Public Address: 1. History, Culture; 2. Theory; 3. Practitioners.

Medieval and Renaissance Public Address: 1. History, Culture; 2. Theory; 3. Practitioners.

Modern Public Address: 1. History, Culture; 2. Theory; 3. Platform Address; 4. Pulpit Address; 5. Radio and Television; 6. Debate; 7. Discussion.

In "The Linguist, the Freshman, and the Purist," *The Speech Teacher*, March, 1954, Lionel Crocker (Denison University) describes the plight of the college freshman caught in the middle in the dispute between the linguists and the purists over the teaching of grammar. Because the orientation or entrance tests in English are made by purists, the freshman is assigned to remedial English sections, also taught by the old-timers. But

the college freshman is sick of being the goat, and his children will know formal grammar. "For the next fifty years we are going to have formal grammar taught again, where the purists say it should be taught, in the grammar schools. The linguist had a good point about language being a science and that it should be treated scientifically, and it is too bad to see him lose out in the struggle. If the linguist could have sold the high school on the necessity of teaching grammar, the scientific attitude toward language might have prevailed. But high school teachers do not want to teach grammar, and the high school students do not want to study it."

"Toward a New Perspective of Grammar and Composition," by Harold Newman, Woodrow Wilson Junior High School, New York City, in *High Points*, April, 1954—though written for high school teachers—has suggestions that may be useful to teachers of college freshmen. He questions the competence of functional grammar "to serve in a dual role as the pragmatic instrument of effective communication and the arbiter of good usage." Illogical sentence structure, bad punctuation, and sentence errors such as fragments, excessive co-ordination, dangling modifiers, shifts in person and tense, and faulty pronoun references can be eliminated without the use of grammar if the student can be trained to clarify and order his thoughts before he writes. "Would it not be reasonable then, that before we teach grammar (if we must) to those who profit least from it, we help them to achieve those principles involved in clear thinking which place them in an intelligent attitude toward the content of their own discourse and the effect of this discourse upon the minds of those affected by reading it?" With this achieved, the student can be introduced to propriety in language or appropriate

usage in terms of the particular place, situation, circumstance, and person involved. As for teaching composition: "English teachers should forget about looking at composition writing as if it were a disguised form of grammatical exercise in which the mechanics of writing assume unduly exaggerated importance to the detriment of content. Instead they should first devote their time to encouraging children to write about subjects which stir them deeply. Once the children are expressing themselves on a topic which means something to them, they will not want to be misunderstood. Here is the right time to help the children to say *what they feel they want to say* by showing them *how* to say one thing at a time; how to illustrate an idea by giving appropriate examples; how to emphasize an idea by means of contrast; how to test their sentences in order to be sure that they don't jump helter-skelter from one point to another; and how to evaluate their writing to see whether they have accomplished what they set out to accomplish."

"work on the improvement of general reading comprehension and rate, review the various methods of vocabulary building and learn to skim, outline, summarize, review, take examinations, increase their flexibility of reading and improve their general approach to study."

Lewis F. Ball, University of Richmond, in "A Little Learning is a Dangerous Thing," *The CEA Critic*, April, 1954, discusses the following weaknesses in the English of entering college freshmen: they cannot spell; they have no real knowledge of grammar (such as reference of pronouns, agreement of subject and verb, the distinction between plurals and possessives); they cannot organize even a two-page theme; they have little to say and not much intellectual curiosity to learn more; they are woefully deficient in taste and appreciation in any of the arts; and very few can read.

The reason for these and other weaknesses is given as: "Public-school training has lost its direction. No longer is its prime purpose the transmission of a liberal education or training in the basic disciplines. It has sacrificed the long-range objective—the mature mind—for the immediately practical." For both college-bound and non-college-bound students, it is necessary that "high school graduates be well instructed in the basic disciplines and the liberal arts."

If high school students do not receive this liberal grounding, the reasons are as follows: (1) The educationists are a vested interest . . . They set their own requirements. (2) They have become impregnated with a great enthusiasm for Dewey—and hardly less for William Heard Kilpatrick. (3) They cherish an abiding prejudice against any relic of the old aristocratic system. This system emphasized content. (4) They distrust scholarship, particularly in the graduate

The Spring, 1954, issue of *The English Record* is a "Special Reading Issue," with nine articles on various phases of reading: chronological, i.e., pre-school, primary, grades 4 to 6, junior high school, senior high school; and ideological, i.e., rural schools, creative reading, and literature courses.

The article on the college level, "Reading Instruction for College Students," by William D. Sheldon, describes the reading improvement services at Syracuse University as typical of such services in colleges and universities—a battery of achievement, capacity, and diagnostic tests with a special course, "Improvement of Learning," for students needing to improve reading and study skills. A class, usually with ten or fifteen students,

schools. (5) Little minds are inevitably attracted to jargon. (6) Teacher training is so encumbered . . . with required courses in education that little room is left over for anything else. (7) A degree in education is an easy way out for the mediocre.

What can be done about it? Require a great deal more composition from grade school on up, and have the papers graded competently and regularly; put more emphasis on spelling and formal grammar; restore Latin and modern foreign languages to a position of respectability; encourage incentive, and revive the idea of promotion according to ability; raise teachers' certification requirements in the subjects they expect to teach; increase teachers' salaries to attract better candidates; raise college entrance requirements; break the monopoly of the interlocking of policy-making and curriculum-making; and have eternal vigilance on the part of an enlightened public.

Louis Ward, Purdue University, in "An 'F' for the Teacher!" in *The CEA Critic*, April, 1954, uses the device of the-theme-written-by-the-student-criticizing-the-composition-teacher. The destructive criticism is that teachers are so much concerned with checking errors of detail in grammar, punctuation, spelling and dictation, are so much under the influence of Beowulf-to-Browning literary study and dissertation writing, that they have neglected better and more important kinds of knowledge: "Brilliant and bespectacled, they walk benignly backward down the crowded thoroughfare of life, their eyes focused gravely on a remote and receding past." Constructive suggestions concerning "who," "what," and "how," are the following: The composition teacher should know his students as persons with a history and a present, as

individuals with attitudes, feelings, emotions, and needs, as typical examples of late-adolescent behavior. Instead of writing to fulfill assignments, students should write to fulfill their needs, should "submit representative samples of the numerous kinds of writing, the successful use of which would help to make their years on campus enjoyable and full." Instead of writing for one reader (the teacher), students should write to be read by students; to persuade, educate, or entertain students; to learn about each other, each other's interests and abilities, the effect of their writing upon people whose reactions are normal; to fulfill the social and communicative purpose of language.

"Freshman English Programs at Iowa Colleges and Universities," *Iowa English Bulletin*, May, 1954, contains brief descriptions from sixteen Iowa institutions. Most have an orientation program in English, a class average of around twenty to twenty-five, a final examination, class meetings of three hours a week (some have four, and some as many as six), weekly or bi-weekly themes, and a term or research paper during the second semester. Sectioning is done in about half the schools, and nearly half have exemptions in one or more English courses. A considerable number have remedial work for the poorly prepared, although in some this remedial work is in addition to required Freshman English. Further summarized, the individual programs are as follows:

*Upper Iowa University*, Fayette. Communication skills, a four-hour course for three quarters, includes reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Objectives: acceptable use of words and idioms, accurate and effective organization and expression of ideas, functional punctuation, interpretation of speakers' and writers' meaning, reading with reasonable speed and comprehension. Orientation tests

separate students needing remedial work in reading, spelling, grammar, and speaking. Only in the last quarter are students in the upper percentiles exempted.

*Parsons College*, Fairfield. Orientation tests separate the remedial students, whose classes meet daily, non-credit; other classes meet three hours a week. Six semester hours of English required; no exemptions; average class size, twenty-one. All staff members, including the department head, teach their share of freshman English.

*Iowa State College*, Ames. Students are placed in high, low, and middle sections, but there is no remedial or non-collegiate course. No exemptions, but 2 to 3 per cent of students are put in speed-up classes and do the year's work in two quarters. No graduate assistants, only full-time teachers. The final examination: in writing—three class papers, written a week apart; in reading—writing in answer to questions about material read on the spot.

*Drake University*, Des Moines. A communication program, six to eight hours' credit necessary. In first semester, the basic philosophy and the foundation principles for the communication skills are taught. All classes are discussion. Average size, thirty. Emphasis on reading and writing. No segregation by ability, but better students can receive credit for second-semester English by examination. All staff members teach freshman English. Essay and objective tests used; final examination counts 20 per cent of the semester grade.

*Buena Vista College*, Storm Lake. "Basic Communications" includes composition, reading, listening. Classes meet five days a week for two semesters; credit, ten semester hours. Sections average twenty-five. High 10 per cent are exempted. Final examination is in speaking and writing, but semester's work is

considered important, also, and instructor uses his judgment in preparing a final grade.

*State University of Iowa*, Iowa City. Tests are given entering students in reading rate, reading comprehension, vocabulary, English placement, expository theme, and a four-minute argumentative speech. Requirement in course is mainly proficiency, not credit; some students are exempted, 20 per cent register for a one-semester course, 60 per cent for two semesters, 15 per cent for three. Each course, four credit hours a semester. According to needs, students are placed in writing-emphasis, speech-emphasis, or balanced sections, which average between twenty and twenty-two. Tutorial help in speech, writing, and reading clinics—voluntary, no credit. "Roughly what is demanded before a student is dismissed from the program is a level of proficiency equal to that possessed by the average junior."

*Coe College*, Cedar Rapids. Sectioning is done mainly on basis of an hour's essay. No exemptions. High 15 to 20 per cent assigned to special freshman sections of basic literary course, Introduction to Humanities. Remaining 80 to 85 per cent assigned to standard freshman course, Constructive English, four times a week, four credits. Range, twenty-two to thirty students. Emphasis is on improved reading, writing, speaking.

*Grand View College*, Des Moines. Through standard tests in reading and composition, 10 per cent are assigned to advanced composition, the remainder in regular sections of twenty-five each. Instruction: blackboard demonstrations, discussions, oral reports, lectures and recitation. Text is a combination workbook and textbook. Final examination, two hours, original composition and questions on grammar. Three oral and three written book reports a year.

*Waldorf College*, Forest City. No exemptions. A remedial non-credit course for the poorly prepared, laboratory method, runs concurrently with freshman English. Class sections, twenty-five to thirty-five members, meet 108 hours a year. Assignments: review of essentials of grammar and mechanics; frequent theme assignments; oral and silent readings; units on the research paper (2500 words), short story, and essay. Mid-term and final examinations in ninth and eighteenth week of each semester, and daily quizzes. Essay and objective questions.

*Iowa State Teachers College*, Cedar Falls. A "traditional" rather than a "communications" or "skills" course, two quarters, four hours a week. Class size, twenty-five. Aim: clear, accurate, well-organized exposition in Standard English. Assignments: usage, paragraph and sentence structure, organization of whole paper, report language, logic, semantics, rhetoric, and the research paper. Among other texts, a dictionary is required. No sectioning, but first-semester exempted students take Mass Communication. Remedial work in a writing clinic is non-credit but voluntary.

*Iowa Wesleyan College*, Mt. Pleasant. A three-hour course in correct reading and writing. A remedial class for poorly prepared is required in addition to the regular class. A proficiency test must be passed to complete the Freshman English requirement. Instruction and practice in best usage, effective expression, and techniques of term papers and reports. Class size, twenty-five. Personal attention to personal writing problems is keynote of the course.

*Cornell College*, Mount Vernon. Freshman English, six hours, required of all students (eight hours required of those assigned to remedial work); no sectioning by ability or achievement; offers instruction in reading and writing, with

the further objective of strengthening and clarifying thought processes in both. Teaching methods: lecture method rarely used; organized and directed discussion the accepted method for handling reading material; students write on topics growing out of reading and class discussion; papers written every two weeks, except for longer papers; individual consultation held according to student's needs. A two-hour remedial course is required in the second semester (in addition to the regular second-semester course) of all students whose first-semester record shows its need (about 30 per cent). Class size, twenty to twenty-five. All teachers of upperclassmen must have at least one class of Freshman English. For the reading, whole works, except for a few essays, are used—mainly fiction and drama. Composition texts and handbooks are used with individual students, not for classroom instruction.

*Central College*, Pella. No sectioning, and no exemptions. Communication Skills, four credit hours, gives training in writing, reading, correct use of the language, and effective speech (the one hour of speech is taught by a member of the Speech Department). Uniform grading standards used. Maximum class size, twenty-five. Reading clinic available. Second-semester work continues first semester's, but also includes the writing of research papers and the study of the short story and poetry.

*William Penn College*, Oskaloosa. "Basic Communication," a three-hour, two-semester course. On basis of an English test, grammar test, and composition test, exemption from first semester's work possible. English laboratory, two hours weekly, no credit, required of weak students. Class size, twenty-five. A speech course is required of freshmen. Basic Communication deals with writing skills: expository types with some description and narration; autobiography or experi-

ence paper, character analysis, personal essay, five-week research paper project. Group discussion and reading support the writing. Progress charts are kept by teacher and student to check elimination of errors in mechanics, sentence structure, and so on.

*Luther College*, Decorah. Design of course: to help each student to understand and evaluate what he hears and reads, to think clearly, and to express his thoughts intelligibly and effectively in writing and speaking. Instruction offered in fundamentals, in frequent writing, and in reading various types of good literature. Two semesters, three hours, with emphasis on exposition in reading and writing, essentials of good writing, functional grammar in first semester, and in second introduction to narration, description, argument, poetry, and research. Remedial work offered on an individual basis; liberal time also for individual counseling. Class size, twenty-five. Each English staff member has at least two sections of Freshman English.

*Clark College*, Dubuque. Low freshmen take an extra hour a week of remedial English. Emphasis is on improvement of reading and writing skills. Each staff member teaches some freshman rhetoric. A reading program is included, with gratifying results which are useful in science and history classes, as well as in writing. Extracurricular reading is generous, and there is also encouragement to write for the college magazine and newspaper.

The September, 1954, *Basic College Newsletter* (Michigan State College) is based on the report of the Dean of the Basic College for 1953-1954. The section on "Communication Skills" deals with the improvement of the instructional program in listening. With research results showing areas of weakness in listening,

the faculty have carried on experimentation and research to test various hypotheses concerned with the teaching of listening and they are convinced that listening comprehension and evaluation of spoken discourse can be greatly improved by direct instruction. Further improvements and refinements in the listening program are planned, with a testing program designed to tell more about the results attained and about the amount of gain in listening ability directly due to listening instruction.

Philip Shaw ("The Dumb English Professor Spells," *Word Study*, October, 1954) in using writing and writing pads for three months while resting his larynx, found he had many misspellings to overcome. His two conclusions:

1. Most spelling errors are reasonable. Words are confused with similar words in sound or meaning, and the misspellings are due to these confusions. For improvement the speller must recognize and study the wrong link or association as well as the correct form—a principle which applies also to misspellings due to errors in pronunciation.

2. The tendency to misspell is a learned weakness. Perhaps a child's parents or friends did not attach a stigma upon adults who spelled poorly, or the child did not have much opportunity to realize the value spelling would have for him in the future. "The poor speller has to regard his tendency to misspell as a below-average achievement for his school, age, or social level, stigmatizing his perceptual acuity, his precision, and his power to learn and recall. Besides noting the false association behind his errors, he should also, in brief, want to spell correctly. He must develop the habit of carefully observing the letter-combinations of words, especially explicit terms of experiences he participates

in. In particular, his principal employment will be a regular source of key words he should perceive carefully. As a high-school pupil or college student, for example, his normal contacts will bring to his attention hundreds of explicit terms in English, social studies, mathematics, science, and foreign language, and in minor subjects."

"In Defense of Our Subject: A Polemic," by Martin Kallich (South Dakota State College), a summary, in *English Notes*, South Dakota Council of Teachers of English, December, 1954. One reason why more students do not become English majors may be the way Freshman English is organized and taught. Let us quit teaching social studies, ideas belonging to a subject area different from our own; if we want good majors in language and literature, we must teach language and literature, and this too during the first year, a crucial year of decision for many students. Solutions proposed are: (1) selecting teachers vitally interested in our subject; (2) selecting as teachers specialists in language and literature; (3) presenting to our students inspiring models of our kind of success—famous writers; (4) agreement on and control of our objectives in our courses; (5) writing new textbooks to supplant those with the social studies approach; (6) motivation of students, not only with ideas but with the literature of radio, TV, and the motion picture.

The October, 1954, *Bulletin of the Kansas Association of Teachers of English* is devoted to the subject, "Techniques in the Development of Critical Thinking Through Reading in the Various Grade Levels"—primary and intermediate grades, junior and senior high schools, and the junior college. Mary Ellis Graham writes concerning the last

named, giving examples of how critical thinking can be secured through reading. In summary form: "In both the speech and literature classes at the junior college level the students have many opportunities to evaluate material. Evaluating ideas is critical thinking. Speech students occasionally give oral interpretation of literature assignments. They interpret everything from tender poems of Eugene Field to Shakespeare. These pupils must understand their selections well enough to bring the correct intellectual and emotional interpretation. This interpretation includes understanding the author's philosophy and ideals. Following a study of such authors as Chaucer, Bacon, and Marlow, the students write brief but significant reactions to these authors and their selections. Here critical thinking and evaluating will have to be put into use again."

Marvin Laser (Chicago Teachers College), "English Composition in Public Junior Colleges," *Junior College Journal*, November, 1954, used a questionnaire covering about 75 key items and sent to the head of the English department in each of 315 accredited public junior colleges in the United States. Responses were received from 127 (40.3 per cent).

Answers were sought to the following questions: "What is the state of English composition courses in public junior colleges today? What are the chief characteristics of such courses? Do (or should) they differ markedly from courses taught in four-year colleges? Are separate courses desirable for terminal students and for those planning to go on to the bachelor's degree? What is actually taught? What about communications rather than composition?"

With twenty-five different names for the basic English course, five major patterns are now in use: 1. A course in Eng-

lish grammar and composition; 2. A course in composition and literature; 3. A course in reading and writing skills; 4. A course in reading, writing, and speaking; 5. A course in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Included also is a table giving a comparative view of twenty-one items considered as major topics in each semester of composition: sub-freshman level, regular first semester, and regular second semester. These items are: 1. Spelling; 2. Punctuation; 3. Grammar; 4. Dictionary; 5. Vocabulary building; 6. Paragraph development; 7. Reading skills; 8. Diction, usage; 9. Library skills; 10. Outlining; 11. Methods of organization; 12. Expository types; 13. Note-taking; 14. Letter writing; 15. Mass media; 16. Nature of language; 17. Imaginative literature; 18. Semantics; 19. Style; 20. Research paper; 21. Logic, argument.

The general conclusions of the article are as follows:

"A composition-oriented course continues to be the dominant pattern in public junior colleges. Whether the emerging trend to communications courses will increase in the future is not yet clear. But as long as English staffs continue to be convinced of the central importance of improving students' competence in writing, it is obvious that, whatever future courses may be called, writing skills will continue to play a major role.

"To learn the skills of writing, most composition teachers agree, an adequate foundation in fundamentals is necessary and at least one semester must be given to provide this foundation; an additional semester is then needed to furnish practice in what may be called the larger skills of writing.

"The majority does not believe at present that a junior college course in composition should be essentially different

from that given in four-year colleges. Nor do most English staffs presently believe that terminal and transfer students should be enrolled in different kinds of freshman composition courses."

Allen G. Erikson offers a couple of rather new ideas in "Can Listening Efficiency Be Improved?" (*Journal of Communication*, Winter, 1954). One is that, when material designed for improving reading is used in listening training, it also improves reading comprehension. The other is that college freshmen improve in listening comprehension without systematic training in listening. In the light of Mr. Erikson's article it appears evident again that the close connection between reading and listening is perhaps the most important single fact that research in listening has yet uncovered. (JEAN MALMSTROM)

Franklin A. Torrence, Jr., of Central High School, Pueblo, Colorado, gives "A Report for Those Interested in Training or Being Trained as Teachers of Basic Communication" in the *Journal of Communication* (Winter, 1954). Mr. Torrence proposed an "ideal" training program on the basis of the opinions of eighty-nine persons. He then submitted his program to twenty-eight administrators. Twenty-three evaluated it favorably, five unfavorably.

The program is indeed ideal. It aims to develop a mature, original, perceptive, responsive, enthusiastic personality in the teacher it trains. It postulates that this teacher shall have an education involving "the acquisition of an integrated introduction to all areas of knowledge" and also including "understanding, appreciation, and skill in three of man's distinctive and inseparable functions: reflective thinking; communicating (verbal and non-verbal); and the employ-

ment of thinking and communicating in social situations which includes the ability to maintain and improve the health of self and society, and the choosing of a vocation appropriate to the needs of both self and society." From such an education the teacher should acquire a special ability in communication and a special ability as a teacher. Mr. Torrence offers no means for determining who has attained the personality, education, and special abilities which his proposed training holds up as ideal. (JEAN MALMSTROM)

E. R. Purpus, Riverside Campus of the University of California, in "Scientific and Technical Literacy," *Journal of Higher Education*, December, 1954, laments the fact that with increased time and energy being given to specialization in science and technology, there is a lessening of training of ability to communicate that knowledge clearly and effectively. The causes: time stolen from communication training and uninterested administrators: "The time required for the assimilation of facts, theories, figures, and mechanisms has most frequently been borrowed from time formerly spent in learning to use the language as an effective tool for communication . . . The dean of one of the major scientific divisions [in a state university] openly fights the requirement of even one semester of composition, and he quite frankly tells his students that a study of English composition is unnecessary for scientists." The solutions suggested: basic courses in logical organization and the use of the language, and a demand by every professor in every scientific and technical course for fully developed expository written assignments and for these being well done as a prerequisite for a passing mark.

A provocative short article by Eliza-

beth J. Norton, Certified Public Accountant, Cameron, Tennent and Dunn, Honolulu (*Journal of Communication*, Winter, 1954) illuminates "The Disproportionate Effect of 'Disintegrators.'" "Disintegrators" are persons "whose communicating tends to pull their group apart rather than to integrate it." The author finds that, because of the many possible combinations of individuals within a group, "the effect of the disintegrators is twice what we would expect from consideration of their comparative number only." (JEAN MALMSTROM)

In "How Pronunciations Are Determined" for recording in a dictionary (*The New Jersey English Leaflet*, January, 1955), Clarence L. Barnhart says: (1) the great majority of words in common use present no problems, since usage is not variable; (2) of large classes of words with regional variations, as many of the less common regional variants are included as there is space for; (3) rare learned and technical terms, being made up usually of classical elements, can be pronounced according to a pattern in similar but more frequently used words; (4) the pronunciation of variants by different speakers (i.e., "arctic," "chauffeur," "culinary," etc.)—if these variants are in good use and fairly common—is determined by a rather large group of special editors and consultants, men trained in linguistics and for years careful observers of American usage.

The Spring, 1955, *Journal of Communication* contains a "Selected Bibliography on the Teaching of Listening at the Secondary Level," compiled and annotated by Sam Duker, Department of Education, Brooklyn College. Because of certain glaring omissions, the bibliography is valuable more for its comments than for its scope. (JEAN MALMSTROM)

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